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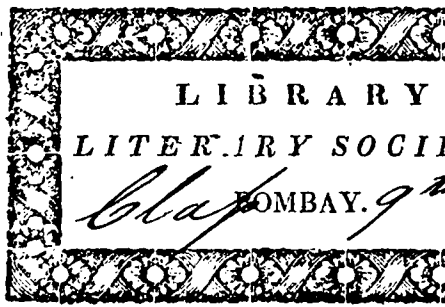

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JOHN CLARE.

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by W. Hilton, R.A.

Published May 21st 1821 by Taylor & Hessey, Fleet St. London.

THE

VILLAGE MINSTREL,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY JOHN CLARE,

THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE PEASANT;

AUTHOR OF "POEMS ON RURAL LIFE AND SCENERY."

"I never list presume to Parnasse Hill,
"But piping low, in shade of lowly grove,
"I play to please myself."------
Spenser's Shep. Kal.

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VOL. I.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR TAYLOR AND HESSEY, FLEET STREET;
AND E. DRURY, STAMFORD.

1821.

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T. Miller, Printer, Noble Street,
Cheapside, London.

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LIBRARY OF THE ATLANTIC

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INTRODUCTION.

THE former volume of JOHN CLARE's Poems was published on the 16th of January, 1820. It immediately received the most flattering notice from several periodical publications, and the interest which was directly taken in the Poet's fate by all ranks, is a circumstance most clearly indicative of the good taste and generous feelings of the nation. A pleasant and judicious account of the author, which was published in the first number of the London Magazine, greatly contributed to this rapid acknowledgment of the merits of the work, and of the justice of the author's pretensions to the distinction of public patronage. It was written by Mr. Gilchrist, of Stamford, whose kindness to CLARE did not cease with that effort in his favour. To him, and all those who, by sympathising with CLARE in the days of his distress, have a peculiar title to be named among his benefactors, the pleasure of

befriending a man of true genius is of itself a sufficient reward:—

> " ——— The praise is better than the price,
> The glory eke much greater than the gain—"

But among these early patrons, one in particular, the Rev. Mr. Mounsey, of the grammar school, Stamford, deserves to be mentioned, as the first person who subscribed to CLARE's intended publication of his own Poems, and the first who gave any encouragement to his faint hopes of success. The naming of this project of our poor author requires that some account should be given of it, as none has appeared in the former Introduction.

In the summer of 1817 CLARE left Helpstone and went into the employment of Mr. Wilders, of Bridge Casterton, Rutlandshire. Here he first met with Patty, who was destined to be his future companion through life—but as he observes in one of his letters at this period, " a poor man's meeting with a wife is reckoned but little improvement to his condition, particularly with the embarrassments I laboured under at that time." With the view of relieving himself from some of these troubles, and thinking it but fair that his love of poesy should contribute to his support as well as his amusement, the latter only being too great a luxury for a poor man

to indulge in, he began to consider seriously about publishing a small volume of Poems by subscription; and having some time before ascertained, from a Printer at Market Deeping, that the expense of three hundred copies of a Prospectus would not be more than one pound, he set himself resolutely to work to obtain that sum. But the story is best told in his own simple words.

"At the latter end of the year I left Casterton and went to Pickworth, a hamlet which seems by its large stretch of old foundations and ruins to have been a town of some magnitude in past times, though it is now nothing more than a half solitude of huts, and odd farm-houses, scattered about, some furlongs asunder: the marks of the ruins may be traced two miles further, from beginning to end. Here by hard working, day and night, I at last got my one pound saved, for the printing of the proposals, which I never lost sight of; and having written many more Poems excited by a change of scenery, and being over head and ears in love,—above all, having the most urgent propensity to scribbling, and considering my latter materials much better than my former, which no doubt was the case,—I considered myself more qualified for the undertaking: so I wrote a letter from this place immediately to Henson, of Market Deeping, wish-

ing him to begin the proposals and address the public himself, urging that he could do it far better than I could, but his answer was that I must do it. After this, I made some attempts, but not having a fit place for doing any thing of that kind, from lodging at a public house, and being pestered with many inconveniences, I could not suit myself by doing it immediately, and so from time to time it was put off. At last I determined, good or bad, to produce something, and as we had another lime-kiln at Ryhall, about three miles from Pickworth, [CLARE was at this time employed in lime-burning] I often went there to work by myself, where I had leisure to study over such things on my journeys of going and returning. On these walks, morning and night, I have dropped down, five or six times, to plan an Address, &c. In one of these musings, my prose thoughts lost themselves in rhyme. Taking a view, as I sat beneath the shelter of a woodland hedge, of my parents' distresses at home, of my labouring so hard and so vainly to get out of debt, and of my still added perplexities of ill-timed love, —striving to remedy all, and all to no purpose, I burst out into an exclamation of distress, "What is Life!" and instantly recollecting that such a subject would be a good one for a poem, I hastily scratted down the two first verses of it, as it stands, as the

beginning of the plan which I intended to adopt, and continued my journey to work. But when I got to the kiln I could not work, for thinking about what I had so long been trying at; so I sat me down on a lime-skuttle, and out with my pencil for an Address of some sort, which, good or bad, I determined to send off that day; and for that purpose, when it was finished, I started to Stamford with it, about three miles off: still, along the road, I was in a hundred minds whether I should throw up all thoughts about the matter, or stay till a fitter opportunity, to have the advice of some friend or other; but, on turning it over in my mind again, a second thought informed me that I had no friend; I was turned adrift on the broad ocean of life, and must either sink or swim: so I weighed matters on both sides, and fancied, let what bad would come, it could but balance with the former: if my hopes of the Poems failed, I should not be a pin worse than usual; I could but work then as I did already: nay, I considered that I should reap benefit from the disappointment; the downfal of my hopes would free my mind, and let me know that I had nothing to trust to, but work. So with this favourable idea I pursued my intention, dropping down on a stone-heap before I entered the town, to give it a second reading, and correct what I thought amiss."

The reader may be curious to see the prose production, which gave our poor poet so much more trouble than any of his poetry. The original paper cannot be in the hands of many persons; even the writer of these pages knew nothing of it when he introduced CLARE's former volume to the notice of the public, having had the first intimation of its existence from the critique in the Quarterly Review.

"Proposals for publishing by Subscription, a Collection of Original Trifles, on miscellaneous Subjects, religious and moral, in Verse, by JOHN CLARE, of Helpstone.

"Some like to laugh their time away,
To dance while pipes and fiddles play,
And have nae sense of ony want,
As long as they can drink and rant.
The rattling drum and trumpet's tout
Delight your swankies that are stout:
May I be happy in my lays,
And win a lasting wreath of bays!
Is a' my wish; well pleas'd to sing
Beneath a tree, or by a spring."

Ramsay.

"CONDITIONS.

"1. The price shall not exceed three shillings and sixpence, in boards; and unless three hundred copies are subscribed for, the work will not be published.

"2. The work shall be put to press immediately after the above number of copies are subscribed for.

"3. It shall be printed on a superfine yellow wove foolscap paper, in octavo size, forming a neat pocket volume.

"4. That it shall be delivered to the subscribers (free of any additional expence) as soon as published, and to be paid for on delivery.—A list of subscribers to be printed in the book.

"ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC.

"The Public are requested to observe, that the TRIFLES humbly offered for their candid perusal can lay no claim to eloquence of poetical composition, (whoever thinks so will be deceived,) the greater part of them being *Juvenile* productions; and those of a later date offsprings of those leisure intervals which the short remittance from hard and manual labour sparingly afforded to compose them. It is hoped that the humble situation which distinguishes their author will be some excuse in their favour, and serve to make an atonement for the many inaccuracies and imperfections that will be found in them. The least touch from the iron hand of *Criticism* is able to crush them to nothing, and sink them at once to utter oblivion. May they be allowed to live their little day, and give satisfaction to those who may choose to honour them with a perusal, they will gain the end for which they were designed, and their author's wishes will be gratified. Meeting with this encouragement, it will induce him to publish a similar collection, of which this is offered as a specimen."

Then followed the Sonnet to the Setting Sun, as it is printed in the former collection.

The Poet was disappointed, as might be conceived, in his expectations of success from this appeal to the poetic taste and discrimination of his neighbours; but it would hardly be thought possible that, when all his prospectuses were distributed, he could only obtain the names of *seven* subscribers.

"I distributed my papers," says the poor author, "but as I could get at no way of pushing them into higher circles than those with whom I was acquainted, they consequently passed off as quietly

as if they had still been in my possession, unprinted and unseen." It appears, however, to have been one of these prospectuses thus freely circulated by CLARE, which, bringing on proposals from another quarter, ended in the publication of the Poems in London.

His friend at Market Deeping now offered to print the work if only one hundred subscribers were obtained, and after that he proposed to commence his operations if CLARE would advance him fifteen pounds: this demand was subsequently reduced to ten pounds, but CLARE's subscribers did not increase with this temptation; they still answered with the little girl, in Wordsworth's Poems, "Nay, master, we are seven:" and so far was CLARE from having ten or fifteen pounds to spare, that he had not at that time fifteen pence to call his own.

The present Publishers gave CLARE twenty pounds for his Poems, and brought them out on the 16th of January, 1820; and so promptly was the benevolence of the higher ranks exerted in behalf of the author, that before the expiration of a month CLARE was in possession of a little fortune. The noble family at Milton Abbey sent for him at the beginning of February, and with a kindness which in its manner made a deeper impression on his heart than even the bounty with which it was accompanied, inquired into the situation and cir-

cumstances of himself, and of his aged parents: Lord Milton then gave him ten pounds, to which the Earl Fitzwilliam added five pounds: and on the following day several articles of clothing and furniture were sent in, to contribute towards the comfort of his father and mother. In the middle of the same month, the Marquis of Exeter appointed CLARE to come to Burghley House, where, after learning the simple particulars of his life, and the means he had of supporting himself, his Lordship told him, that as it appeared he was able to earn thirty pounds a year by working every day, he would allow him an annuity of fifteen guineas for life, that he might, without injury to his income, devote half that time to poetry. The regard for CLARE'S welfare, which dictated this proposal, is no less kind than the liberality of the benefaction; but unfortunately some of the habits of a literary life are inconsistent with laborious occupations: CLARE has often been called from the harvest field three or four times a day, to gratify the curiosity of strangers who went to Helpstone for the purpose of seeing him. This very considerably interrupted the usual course of his employments, and prevented him from deriving that income, from the half labour of his life, which had been anticipated. But his good fortune was determined to supply a counterpoise to every disadvantage.

About the very time that the Marquis of Exeter laid so amply the foundation of CLARE's independence on the one hand, the Earl Fitzwilliam sent one hundred pounds to his Publishers, which, with the like sum advanced by them, was laid out in the purchase of stock, with the view of securing our Poet from the condition of extreme poverty which otherwise might await him when, like other novelties of the day, he, in his turn, should be forgotten. This fund was immediately augmented by the contributions of several noblemen and gentlemen*, chiefly through the instrumentality of Admiral

* The following are the names of the principal contributors:—

His R. H. the Prince Leopold	£10 0
The Duke of Bedford	20 0
The Duke of Devonshire	20 0
The Duke of Northumberland	10 0
The Earl of Cardigan	10 0
The Earl of Brownlow	10 0
The Earl of Winchilsea	10 0
The Earl Manvers	10 0
The Earl of Egremont	10 0
The Earl Rivers	5 0
Lord Kenyon	10 0
Lord Northwick	10 0
Lord John Russell	10 0
Lord Arden	5 5
Sir Thomas Baring, Bart.	10 0
Sir Thomas Plumer	5 0
Jesse Watts Russell, Esq. M. P.	5 0
Edward Lee, Esq.	5 0

With several smaller donations.

Lord Radstock, whose zeal for the improvement of CLARE's condition, in every sense, is as much above all praise, as his Lordship's assiduity in his benevolent career is probably without parallel. The sums thus collected, amounting to two hundred and twenty pounds thirteen shillings, were, with the former two hundred, invested in the Navy five per cents. in the names of trustees; and, at Midsummer, the interest resulting from this source amounted to twenty pounds per annum. This establishment of CLARE's future income on a firm basis was completed by an allowance from the Earl Spencer of ten pounds per ann. for life: his Lordship was at Naples when he heard of CLARE's talents and penury, in a letter from Mr. Bell of Stamford: he became interested in the fate of the Poet, and promised his assistance. But the honour of being the patron of poesy is hereditary in the family of Spencer, and seems of right to belong to the kinsman of the prince of poets.

From these various gifts and annuities CLARE became possessed of an income of forty-five pounds a year, which may be said to have been conferred upon him from the 1st of January, 1820, the respective payments having all commenced from that day. His means of living it is hoped will be increased still further by the publication of the

present work, and by the profit which may arise from the continued sale of his first production.

In the Spring of 1820, CLARE married "Patty of the Vale,"—"the Rosebud in humble Life,"—or, to speak in prose, Martha Turner, the daughter of a cottage farmer residing at Walkherd Lodge in the neighbourhood of Bridge Casterton, whose portion consisted of nothing beyond the virtues of industry, frugality, neatness, good-temper, and a sincere love for her husband; qualities, indeed, which contribute more than wealth to the happiness of the marriage state; but money is still a desirable accompaniment, and for want of it our Poet's finances are somewhat too much straitened to support his family with comfort. His household consists at the present time of his father and mother, who are aged and infirm, his wife, and a little girl who bids fair to be the eldest of a family, which at this rate may be expected to be pretty numerous. They all live together in the cottage in which CLARE was born.

Since sending his former Poems to the press, CLARE has written the whole of the following collection, with the exception of the Excursion to Burghley Park, Helpstone Green, To the Violet, The Wood-Cutter's Night Song, To the Butterfly, To Health, May-Day, William and Robin, and the

first five Sonnets.—The third Sonnet and May-Day were written on the illness and death of a youth who was CLARE's earliest friend and favourite playfellow, and the brother of John Turnill, the excise-man who taught CLARE to write. Some of these Poems are ten or twelve years old. The pastoral, William and Robin, one of his earliest efforts, exhibits a degree of refinement, and elegant sensibility, which many persons can hardly believe a poor uneducated clown could have possessed: the delicacy of one of the lovers towards the object of his attachment is as perfectly inborn and unaffected as if he were a Philip Sidney.—It also shews that a style of writing, caught from the accredited pastoral poets, which so many admire, was not above CLARE's reach, had not his good sense taught him to abandon it for the more difficult but less appreciated language of nature.

The Village Minstrel was begun in the autumn of 1819; the writer of these lines saw in November about one hundred stanzas of it, and it was finished soon after the former volume made its appearance. To the fate of that volume the author alludes with much natural anxiety at the end of this poem,

"And wishes time her secrets would explain,
If he may live for joys, or sink in 'whelming pain."

And the state of dreary misery in which he then

lived must be his excuse for some apparently discontented stanzas about the middle of the poem, if any excuse be necessary for some of the most vigorous and beautiful ebullitions of true poesy that can be met with in our language.

The regret of a poet for the loss of some object in nature, to which many of the dearest recollections of his earliest and happiest days had attached themselves, is always vehement; but who can wonder at or condemn it? If an old post had such attractions for Pope, surrounded as he was with comfort and luxury, what allowance ought not to be made for the passionate regard of poor CLARE for things which were the landmarks of his life, the depositaries of almost all his joys? But the poet can be as much a philosopher as another man when the fit is off: in a letter to the writer of these lines he laments the purposed destruction of two elm trees which overhang his little cottage, in language which would surprise a man whose blood is never above temperate; but the reflection of a wiser head instantly follows:—"My two favourite elm trees at the back of the hut are condemned to die—it shocks me to relate it, but 'tis true. The savage who owns them thinks they have done their best, and now he wants to make use of the benefits he can get from selling them. O was this country Egypt, and was I but a caliph,

the owner should lose his ears for his arrogant presumption; and the first wretch that buried his axe in their roots should hang on their branches as a terror to the rest. I have been several mornings to bid them farewel. Had I one hundred pounds to spare I would buy them reprieves—but they must die. Yet this mourning over trees is all foolishness—they feel no pains—they are but wood, cut up or not. A second thought tells me I am a fool: were people all to feel as I do, the world could not be carried on,—a green would not be ploughed—a tree or bush would not be cut for firing or furniture, and every thing they found when boys would remain in that state till they died. This is my indisposition, and you will laugh at it."

A few references are made in the Village Minstrel, to country sports and customs, which, perhaps, need a little explanation, and it is offered the rather because it can be given in the Poet's own words.

"*Old Ball.*—You mean the shagg'd foal. It's a common tradition in villages that the devil often appears in the form of a shagg'd foal; and a man in our parish firmly believes that he saw him in that character one morning early in harvest. 'Like offspring of old Ball,' means nothing more than the foal of a mare, only boys are particular in saying it was just like the foal of such a one."

"*Fiery Parrot.*—A candle lighted is placed on the mantle-piece or elsewhere, and on the far side of the house stands a tub full of water, with a sheet over the top, on each side of which, on the edge of the tub, sits a girl, while a young fellow is selected out to sit between them (generally the roughest and rudest clown in the company); who, transported with the idea of having so pleasant a seat, is generally very anxious and willing to perform it. In proceeding to his seat of fancied paradise, he is to walk backwards, looking earnestly at the candle burning before him; and thus he goes on till he gets between the young maidens, who, as he drops down, rise in an instant, while the loosed sheet gives way, and often lets him in over head and ears. Thus bent in the confines of the tub, he cannot stir till assistance releases him from his uncomfortable disappointment."

"*Sheet-clad Crane.*—A man holds in his hand a long stick, with another tied at the top in the form of an L reversed, which represents the long neck and beak of the crane. This, with himself, is entirely covered with a large sheet. He mostly makes excellent sport, as he puts the whole company to the rout, picking out the young girls, and pecking at the bald heads of the old men; nor stands he upon the least ceremony in this character, but takes the liberty to break the master's pipe, and spill his beer,

as freely as those of his men. It is generally a private caution with one of the actors in this tragi-comedy, to come into the room before the crane's approach, with an excuse to want several of the candles for alleged uses, till there are but few left; that the lights may be the more readily extinguished; which he generally contrives to put out on his departure, leaving all in darkness and the utmost confusion. This mostly begins the night's diversions, as the prologue to the rest; while the 'booted hogs' wind up as the entertainment, and finish the play of the harvest-supper night."

"*Booted Hogs.*—A kind of punishment to such boys as have carelessly neglected their duty in the harvest, or treated their labour with negligence instead of attention; as letting their cattle get pounded, or overthrowing their loads, &c. A long form is placed in the kitchen, upon which the boys who have worked well sit, as a terror and disgrace to the rest, in a bent posture, with their hands laid on each other's backs, forming a bridge for the *hogs* (as the truant boys are called) to pass over; while a strong chap stands on each side, with a boot legging, soundly strapping them as they scuffle over the bridge, which is done as fast as their ingenuity can carry them."

"*The Dusty* or *Deaf Miller* appears in the room with a hunch back, and a brush in one hand, and a

basket in the other. His man, a kind of Tom-Fool, accompanies him, with a pair of bellows and a smelling-bottle. The miller's face is whitened with chalk or whiting: in his basket he has bread and cheese, and a bottle of ale, which he places on a table behind him, where his wife is placed, as seemingly unknown to him, and takes it away as fast as he places it thereon. He affects to be surprised, and pretending deafness, runs over a mess of senseless gibberish to his man, whom he beats for the supposed theft; till at last, knocking his brush behind, he accidentally brings his wife to the ground, which coming to his knowledge throws him into a great consternation, and he instantly begins to have recourse to a remedy for bringing her to life, which is done by using the bellows and the smelling-bottle. On her recovery they hobble out of the room, and the farce concludes."

"*Scotch Pedlars, or the Scotchman's Pack.*—Two men come in, covered with blankets stuffed with straw, at their back. They call out as they come in 'Corks and Blue,' and then sit down and call for ale, the scene being a public house. They begin to drink, and run over droll stories and recollections of their former travels, &c. One seeming more covetous of beer than the other (whose tongue keeps him employed), takes every now and then a pull at the tankard as opportunity offers,

unknown to his talkative companion, in consequence of which the tankard is often empty and filled; and on calling for the reckoning, the other who has been busied in discourse, starts, surprised at the largeness of the bill, and refuses payment. The other, nearly drunk, reels and staggers about, and stubbornly resists all persuasions of satisfaction on his part, which brings on a duel with their long staves, driving each other out of the room as a termination to the scene."

It is not our province to comment on the following Poems,—we must leave it to the professed critics to exercise their usual discrimination, in bringing forward the faults and beauties of the author. Of the former the detection is not difficult,—but it requires something of generosity and high-mindedness to perceive and appreciate beauties,—some consanguinity with the poet to feel what we would express,—and some wisdom to admit, in doubtful places, where the judgment of the poet and the critic differ, that he may be right, and that an appeal ought not to be made from the higher to the lower tribunal:—for the critic is not the poet's superior, though he often affects to be so, on the strength of having had, probably, a better education; as if the Latin and Greek which can be driven into a boy's head at school, for a certain sum of money, were a

more valuable possession than the rarely found, unbought, unpurchasable endowment of genius from the hand of the Creator.

> "What more felicity can fall to creature
> Than to enjoy delight with liberty,
> And to be lord of all the works of nature,
> To reign in th' air from th' earth to highest sky,
> To feed on flowers and weeds of glorious feature,
> To take whatever thing doth please the eye?"—

The poet enjoys all this right royally, but he does not reserve it for his own gratification: he makes all the rest of his fellow-creatures happy, in the same degree, by placing before them "whatever thing doth please the eye." Thus CLARE bids his inspired flowers and trees grow up in our sight, and assume characters which we did not discover in them before. He saw them, having his vision cleared by the euphrasy of a poetical imagination: he brings them out into the clear light of day, and sets them as pictures and statues in a gallery, to be the charm and glory of many a future age; "such tricks hath strong imagination," even in the mind of an illiterate peasant.

> "Thus Nature works as if to mock at Art,
> And in defiance of her rival powers;
> By these fortuitous and random strokes
> Performing such inimitable feats
> As she with all her rules can never reach."

CLARE has created more of these never-dying forms, in the personification of things inanimate and abstract,—he has scattered them more profusely about our paths, than perhaps any poet of the age except one;—and having contributed so much to our gratification, what ought we to render in return to him?—He deserves our favour, as one who tries to please us—our thanks, for having so richly increased the stores of our most innocent enjoyments—our sympathy; and something more substantial than mere pity, because he is placed in circumstances, grievous enough to vulgar minds, but to a man of his sensibility more than commonly distressing;—and our regard and admiration, that, sustaining so many checks and obstructions, his constant mind should have at length shone out with the splendour which animates it in these productions:

> "For who would ever care to do brave deed,
> Or strive in virtue others to excel,
> If none should yield him his deserved meed,
> Due praise, that is the spur of doing well?"

Poets of all ages have been cherished and rewarded, and this, not as of mere favour, but from a feeling that they have a claim to be so considered. If of late years a less generous treatment has been experienced by any, it is not chargeable on the

nature of man in general, but on an illiberal spirit of criticism, which, catching its character from the bad temper of the age, has "let slip the dogs of war" in the flowery fields of poesy. We may hope that kinder feelings are returning, that "olives of endless age" will grace the future Belles Lettres of our country, and that especially the old and natural relation of poet and patron may be again acknowledged, as it has been in the present instance:—

> "The kindly dew drops from the higher tree,
> And wets the little plants that lowly dwell."

THE

VILLAGE MINSTREL.

Argument.

Introduction—Lubin's childhood—his Winter Amusements—Fairy Tales—His superstitious Fancies—Approach of Spring—May-day—His Parents—Lubin described—Village-conversation—His Love of Nature—Summer Amusements—the Stockdove—Insects—Fairy Rings—Recollections of unhappy Incidents—Autumn-time—the Street—the Corn-field—Gleaners—old Women's Stories—Harvest-home—its Sports described—Harvest Supper—Autumn Scenes—Indications of approaching Winter—Apostrophe to Woman—The Statute described—Ballad-singers—Poor Sailor—"Civil Will"—Recruiting Serjeant—The Village Feast—the Dance—Rural Love—the Cotter and his Friends—his Soliloquy—Village Sports enumerated—Lubin in Solitude—the old Castle—Songs of Robin Hood—The Village Green enclosed—its former State contrasted with its present Appearance—Regret at the Change—Inclosure deprecated by the Peasantry—their Recollections of former Pleasures—The Gipsies' Camp—their Habits—Native Scenes in early Life—the universal Interest they excite—Effect on Lubin—Apostrophe to the dead Shepherds—His preference still of Home to other Places—Hopes and Fears—Anxiety for the Future—Resignation.

THE

VILLAGE MINSTREL.

I.

WHILE learned poets rush to bold extremes,
And sunbeams snatch to light the muse's fires,
An humble rustic hums his lowly dreams,
Far in the shade where poverty retires,
And sings what nature and what truth inspires;
The charms that rise from rural scenery,
Which he in pastures and in woods admires;
The sports, the feelings of his infancy,
And such like artless things how mean soe'er they be.

II.

Though, far from what the learned's toils requite,
He unambitious looks at no renown,
Yet little hopes break his oblivious night,
To cheer the bosom of a luckless clown,
Where black neglect spreads one continual frown,
And threats her constant winter cold and chill;
Where toil and slavery bear each fancy down,
That fain would soar and sing " albeit ill,"
And force him to submit to fate's controlling will.

III.

Young Lubin was a peasant from his birth;
His sire a hind born to the flail and plough,
To thump the corn out and to till the earth,
The coarsest chance which nature's laws allow,—
To earn his living by a sweating brow;
Thus labour's early days did rugged roll,
Mixt with untimely toil;—but e'en as now,
Ambitious prospects fired his little soul,
And fancy soared and sung, 'bove poverty's control.

IV.

Small joy to him were childhood's tempting tricks,
Which school-boys look for in their vacant hours;
With other boys he little cared to mix;
Joy left him lonely in his hawthorn bowers,
As haply binding up his knots of flowers,
Or list'ning unseen birds to hear them sing;
Or gazing downward where the runnel pours,
Through the moss'd bridge, in many a whirling ring;
How would he muse o'er all on pleasure's fairy wing.

V.

The "I spy," "halloo," and the marble-ring,
And many a game that infancy employs,
The spinning-top whirl'd from the twitching string,
The boastful jump of strong exulting boys,
Their sports, their pastimes, all their pleasing toys
We leave unsung—though much such rural play
Would suit the theme—yet they're not Lubin's joys:
Truth breathes the song in Lubin's steps to stray,
Through woods, and fields, and plains, his solitary way;

VI.

And tell how vales and shades did please his sight,
And how the wind breath'd music thro' each bough,
And how in rural charms he did delight,—
To mark the shepherd's folds, and swains at plough,
And pasture speck'd with sheep, and horse, and cow,
With many a beauty that does intervene;
And steeple peeping o'er the wood's dark brow:
While young hope's fancy popt its smile between,
And wish'd man's days to spend in some such peaceful scene.

VII.

Each opening season, and each opening scene,
On his wild view still teem'd with fresh delight;
E'en winter's storms to him have welcome been,
That brought him comfort in its long dark night,
As joyful list'ning, while the fire burnt bright,
Some neighbouring labourer's superstitious tale,
How "Jack-a-lantern," with his wisp alight,
To drown a 'nighted traveller once did fail,
He knowing well the brook that whimper'd down the vale.

VIII.

And tales of fairy-land he lov'd to hear,
Those mites of human forms, like skimming bees,
That fly and flirt about but every-where;
The mystic tribes of night's unnerving breeze,
That through a lock-hole even creep with ease:
The freaks and stories of this elfin crew,
Ah, Lubin gloried in such things as these;
How they rewarded industry he knew,
And how the restless slut was pinched black and blue.

IX.

How ancient dames a fairy's anger fear'd,
From gossip's stories Lubin often heard;
How they on every night the hearth-stone clear'd,
And 'gainst their visits all things neat prepar'd,
As fays nought more than cleanliness regard;
When in the morn they never fail'd to share
Or gold or silver as their meet reward,
Dropt in the water superstition's care
To make the charm succeed had cautious placed there.

X.

And thousands such the village keeps alive;
Beings that people superstitious earth,
That e'er in rural manners will survive,
As long as wild rusticity has birth
To spread their wonders round the cottage-hearth.
On Lubin's mind these deeply were imprest;
Oft fear forbade to share his neighbour's mirth:
And long each tale, by fancy newly drest,
Brought fairies in his dreams, and broke his infant rest.

XI.

He had his dreads and fears, and scarce could pass
A church-yard's dreary mounds at silent night,
But footsteps trampled through the rustling grass,
And ghosts 'hind grave-stones stood in sheets of white;
Dread monsters fancy moulded on his sight:
Soft would he step lest they his tread should hear,
And creep and creep till past his wild affright;
Then on wind's wings would rally as it were,
So swift the wild retreat of childhood's fancied fear.

XII.

And when fear left him, on his corner-seat,
Much would he chatter o'er each dreadful tale;
Tell how he heard the sound of 'proaching feet,
And warriors jingling in their coats of mail;
And lumping knocks as one would thump a flail;
Of spirits conjur'd in the charnel floor;
And many a mournful shriek and hapless wail,
Where maids self-murder'd their false loves deplore;
And from that time would vow to tramp on nights no more.

XIII.

O who can speak his joys when spring's young morn
From wood and pasture open'd on his view,
When tender green buds blush upon the thorn,
And the first primrose dips its leaves in dew:
Each varied charm how joy'd would he pursue,
Tempted to trace their beauties through the day;
Grey-girdled eve, and morn of rosy hue
Have both beheld him on his lonely way,
Far, far remote from boys, and their unpleasing play.

XIV.

Sequester'd nature was his heart's delight;
Him would she lead thro' wood and lonely plain,
Searching the pooty from the rushy dyke;
And while the thrush sang her long-silenc'd strain,
He thought it sweet, and mock'd it o'er again:
And while he pluck'd the primrose in its pride,
He ponder'd o'er its bloom 'tween joy and pain;
And a rude sonnet in its praise he tried,
Where nature's simple way the aid of art supplied.

XV.

The freshen'd landscapes round his routs unfurl'd,
The fine-ting'd clouds above, the woods below,
Each met his eye a new-revealing world,
Delighting more as more he learn'd to know;
Each journey sweeter, musing to and fro.
Surrounded thus, not paradise more sweet,
Enthusiasm made his soul to glow;
His heart with wild sensations used to beat;
As nature seemly sang, his mutterings would repeat.

XVI.

Upon a molehill oft he dropt him down,
To take a prospect of the circling scene,
Marking how much the cottage roof's-thatch brown
Did add its beauty to the budding green
Of sheltering trees it humbly peep'd between—
The stone-rock'd waggon with its rumbling sound;
The windmill's sweeping sails at distance seen;
And every form that crowds the circling round,
Where the sky stooping seems to kiss the meeting ground.

XVII.

And dear to him the rural sports of May,
When each cot-threshold mounts its hailing bough,
And ruddy milkmaids weave their garlands gay,
Upon the green to crown the earliest cow;
When mirth and pleasure wear a joyful brow;
And join the tumult with unbounded glee
The humble tenants of the pail and plough:
He lov'd "old sports," by them reviv'd, to see,
But never car'd to join in their rude revelry.

XVIII.

O'er brook-banks stretching, on the pasture-sward,
He gaz'd, far distant from the jocund crew;
'Twas but their feats that claim'd a slight regard;
'Twas his, his pastimes lonely to pursue—
Wild blossoms creeping in the grass to view,
Scarce peeping up the tiny bent as high,
Beting'd with glossy yellow, red, or blue,
Unnam'd, unnotic'd but by Lubin's eye,
That like low genius sprang to bloom their day and die.

XIX.

O who can tell the sweets of May-day's morn,
To waken rapture in a feeling mind,
When the gilt east unveils her dappled dawn,
And the gay woodlark has its nest resign'd,
As slow the sun creeps up the hill behind;
Morn redd'ning round, and daylight's spotless hue,
As seemingly with rose and lily lin'd;
While all the prospect round beams fair to view,
Like a sweet opening flower with its unsullied dew.

XX.

Ah, often brushing through the dripping grass,
Has he been seen to catch this early charm,
List'ning the " love song" of the healthy lass
Passing with milk-pail on her well-turn'd arm;
Or meeting objects from the rousing farm;
The jingling plough-teams driving down the steep,
Waggon and cart—and shepherd-dogs' alarm,
Raising the bleatings of unfolding sheep,
As o'er the mountain top the red sun 'gins to peep.

XXI.

Nor could the day's decline escape his gaze;
He lov'd the closing as the rising day,
And oft would stand to catch the setting rays,
Whose last beams stole not unperceiv'd away;
When, hesitating like a stag at bay,
The bright unwearied sun seem'd loth to drop,
Till chaos' night-hounds hurried him away,
And drove him headlong from the mountain-top,
And shut the lovely scene, and bade all nature stop.

XXII.

With contemplation's stores his mind to fill,
O doubly happy would he roam as then,
When the blue eve crept deeper round the hill,
While the coy rabbit ventur'd from his den,
And weary labour sought his rest agen;
Lone wanderings led him haply by the stream
Where unperceiv'd he 'joy'd his hours at will,
Musing the cricket twittering o'er its dream,
Or watching o'er the brook the moon-light's dancing beam.

XXIII.

And here the rural muse might aptly say,
As sober evening sweetly siles along,
How she has chas'd black ignorance away,
And warm'd his artless soul with feelings strong
To teach his reed to warble forth a song:
And how it echoed on the even-gale,
All by the brook the pasture-flowers among;
But, ah, such trifles are of no avail:
There's few to notice him, or hear his simple tale.

XXIV.

As most of nature's children prove to be,
His little soul was easy made to smart,
His tear was quickly born to sympathy,
And soon were rous'd the feelings of his heart
In others' woes and wants to bear a part.
Yon parish-huts, where want is shov'd to die,
He never view'd them but his tear would start;
He past not by the doors without a sigh,
And felt for every woe of workhouse-misery.

XXV.

O Poverty! thy frowns were early dealt
O'er him who mourn'd thee, not by fancy led
To whine and wail o'er woes he never felt,
Staining his rhymes with tears he never shed,
And heaving sighs a mock song only bred:
Alas! he knew too much of every pain
That shower'd full thick on his unshelter'd head;
And as his tears and sighs did erst complain,
His numbers took it up, and wept it o'er again.

XXVI.

Full well might he his early days recal,
When he a thresher with his sire has been;
When he a ploughboy in the fields did maul,
And drudg'd with toil through almost every scene;
How pinch'd with winter's frownings he has been;
And tell of all that modesty conceals,
Of what his friends and he have felt and seen:
But, useless naming what distress reveals,
As every child of want feels all that Lubin feels.

XXVII.

It might be curious here to hint the lad,
How in his earliest days he did appear;
Mean was the dress in which the boy was clad,
His friends so poor, and clothes excessive dear,
They oft were foil'd to rig him once a year;
And housewife's care in many a patch was seen;
Much industry 'gainst want did persevere:
His friends tried all to keep him neat and clean,
Though care has often fail'd, and shatter'd he has been.

XXVIII.

Yet oft fair prospects cheer'd his parent's dreams,
Who had on Lubin founded many a joy;
But pinching want soon baffled all their schemes,
And dragg'd him from the school a hopeless boy,
To shrink unheeded under hard employ;
When struggling efforts warm'd him up the while,
To keep the little toil could not destroy;
And oft with books spare hours he would beguile,
And blunder oft with joy round Crusoe's lonely isle.

XXIX.

Folks much may wonder how the thing may be,
That Lubin's taste should seek refined joys,
And court th' enchanting smiles of poesy;
Bred in a village full of strife and noise,
Old senseless gossips, and blackguarding boys,
Ploughmen and threshers; whose discourses led
To nothing more than labour's rude employs,
'Bout work being slack, and rise and fall of bread,
And who were like to die, and who were like to wed:

XXX.

Housewives discoursing 'bout their hens and cocks,
Spinning long stories, wearing half the day;
Sad deeds bewailing of the prowling fox;
How in the roost the thief had knav'd his way,
And made their market-profits all a prey.
And other losses too the dames recite,
Of chick, and duck, and gosling gone astray;
All falling prizes to the swopping kite:
And so the story runs both morning, noon, and night.

XXXI.

Nor sabbath-days much better thoughts instil;
The true-going churchman hears the signal ring,
And takes his book his homage to fulfil,
And joins the clerk his amen-task to sing,
And rarely home forgets the text to bring:
But soon as service ends, he 'gins again
'Bout signs in weather, late or forward spring,
Of prospects good or bad in growing grain;
And if the sermon's long he waits the end with pain.

XXXII.

A more uncouthly lout was hardly seen
Beneath the shroud of ignorance than he;
The sport of all the village he has been,
Who with his simple looks oft jested free;
And gossips, gabbling o'er their cake and tea,
Time after time did prophecies repeat,
How half a ninny he was like to be,
To go so soodling up and down the street,
And shun the playing boys whene'er they chanc'd to meet.

XXXIII.

Nature look'd on him with a 'witching eye,
Her pleasing scenes were his delightful book,
Where he, while other louts roam'd heedless by,
With wild enthusiasm us'd to look.
The kingcup vale, the gravel-paved brook,
Were paradise with him to muse among;
And haply sheltering in some lonely nook,
He often sat to see it purl along,
And, fir'd with what he saw, humm'd o'er his simple song.

XXXIV.

When summer came, how eager has he sped
Where silence reign'd, and the old crowned tree
Bent with its sheltering ivy o'er his head;
And summer-breezes, breathing placidly,
Encroach'd upon the stockdove's privacy,
Parting the leaves that screen'd her russet breast:
"Peace!" would he whisper, "dread no thief in me,"
And never rose to rob her careless nest;
Compassion's softness reign'd, and warm'd his gentle breast.

XXXV.

And he would trace the stagnant pond or lake,
Where flags sprang up or water-lilies smil'd;
And wipe the boughs aside of bush and brake,
And creep the woods with sweetest scenes beguil'd;
Tracking some channel on its journey wild,
Where dripping blue-bells on the bank did weep:
O what a lovely scene to nature's child,
Through roots and o'er dead leaves to see it creep,
Watching on some moss'd stump in contemplation deep.

XXXVI.

And he would mark in July's rosy prime,
Crossing the meadows, how a nameless fly
Of scarlet plumage, punctual to its time,
Perch'd on a flower would always meet his eye;
And plain-drest butterfly of russet dye,
As if awaken'd by the scythe's shrill sound,
Soon as the bent with ripeness 'gan to dye,
Was constant with him in each meadow-ground,
Flirting the withering swath and unmown blossom round.

XXXVII.

No insect 'scap'd him, from the gaudy plume
Of dazzling butterflies so fine to view,
To the small midges that at evening come,
Like dust spots, dancing o'er the water's blue;
Or, where the spreading oak above-head grew,
Tormenting maidens 'neath their kicking cow;
Who often murmur'd at the elfin crew,
And from th' endanger'd pail, with angry vow
Oft rose, their sport to spoil with switch of murdering bough.

XXXVIII.

And he has mark'd the curious stained rings,
Though seemly nothing in another's eye,
And bending o'er them thought them wondrous things,
Where nurses' night-fays circling dances hie,
And set the cock to watch the morning's eye;
Light soon betrays 'em where their routs have been,
Their printing foot-marks leave a magic dye,
The grass grows gloomy in a darker green,
And look for years to come, and still the place is seen.

XXXIX.

And as declining day his stalking shade
A giant monster stretch'd, in fancy's view,
What bustle to his cottage has he made,
Ere sliving night around his journey threw
Her circling curtains of a grizly hue;
Then of the rings the fairy routs display'd
From gossip's wisdom much he glean'd, who knew
How they were haunts for ghosts as well as fays,
And told what things were seen in granny's younger days.

XL.

The verse might tremble with the "haunted pond,"
And tell of terrors which his heart has found;
How he, to 'scape, shool'd many a pace beyond
Each dreaded, dangerous spot of haunted ground:
Here as he pass'd where Amy's woes were drown'd,
If late at night, his fears would turn him chill;
If nought was seen, he heard a squish-squash sound,
As when one's shoes the drenching waters fill,
And wet and dripping oft he saw her climb the hill.

XLI.

And round his fields lay many a spot to dread;
'Twould note a history down to mark them all:
Oft monsters have been seen without a head;
And market-men oft got a dangerous fall,
When startled horses saw the sweeping pall
On the cross-roads where "love-lorn Luce" was lain;
At other spots, like offsprings of "Old Ball,"
Or ploughman's senses often were mista'en,
A shagged foal would fright the early-rising swain.

XLII.

In autumn-time he often stood to mark
What tumults 'tween the hogs and geese arose,
Down the corn-litter'd street; and the rude bark
Of jealous watch-dog on his master's clothes,
E'en rous'd by quawking of the flopping crows;
And every tinkle in that busy toil,
In sultry field and dusty lane that flows:
He glean'd his corn, and lov'd to list the while,
For Lubin mingled there to share of autumn's spoil.

XLIII.

And when old women, overpower'd by heat,
Tuck'd up their clothes and sicken'd at the toil,
Seeking beneath the thorn the mole-hill seat,
To tell their tales and catch their breath awhile,
Their gabbling talk did Lubin's cares beguile;
And some would tell their tales, and some would sing,
And many a dame, to make the children smile,
Would tell of many a funny laughing thing,
While merrily the snuff went pinching round the ring.

XLIV.

Here Lubin listen'd with awe-struck surprise,
When "Hickathrift's" great strength has met his ear,
How he kill'd giants as they were but flies,
And lifted trees as one would lift a spear,
Though not much bigger than his fellows were;
He knew no troubles waggoners have known,
Of getting stall'd, and such disasters drear;
Up he'd chuck sacks as one would hurl a stone,
And draw whole loads of grain unaided and alone.

XLV.

And Goody's sympathy would fetch the tear
From each young list'ner seated by her side,
When "cruel Barbara Allen" they did hear,
The haughty stubbornness of female pride
To that fond youth who broke his heart and died:
And "Jack the giant-killer's" tales she'd say,
Which still the same enchanting power supplied;
The stagnant tear amazement wip'd away,
And Jack's exploits were felt for many an after-day.

XLVI.

These were such tales as Lubin did delight;
But should the muse narrate in Goody's strain,
And tell of all she told from morn till night,
Fays, ghosts, and giants would her songs detain
To be at day's return resumed again:
With "Cinderella" she has charm'd awhile,
Then "Thumb's" disasters gave a moment's pain;
Thus true-thought legends would each soul beguile,
As superstition will'd, to raise the tear or smile.

XLVII.

And as the load jogg'd homeward down the lane,
When welcome night shut out the toiling day,
Following he mark'd the simple-hearted swain;
Joying to listen, on his homeward way,
While rest's warm rapture rous'd the rustic's lay,
The thread-bare ballad from each quavering tongue,
As "Peggy Band," or the "sweet month of May:"
Oh how he joy'd to hear each "good old song,"
That on night's pausing ear did echo loud and long.

XLVIII.

The muse might sing too, for he well did know,
The freaks and plays that harvest-labour end,
How the last load is crown'd with boughs, and how
The swains and maids with fork and rake attend,
With floating ribbons 'dizen'd at the end;
And how the children on the load delight
With shouts of " Harvest home!" their throats to rend;
And how the dames peep out to mark the sight;
And all the feats that crown the harvest-supper night.

XLIX.

He knew all well, a young familiar there,
And often look'd on all; for he himsen
Join'd with the sun-tann'd group the feast to share,
As years roll'd round him with the change agen,
And brought the masters level with their men,
Who push'd the beer about, and smok'd and drank
With freedom's plenty, never shewn till then;
Nor labourers dar'd, but now, so free and frank
To laugh, and joke, and play so many a harmless prank.

L.

Much has he laugh'd each rude, rude act to see;
The long-neck'd sheet-clad "crane" to poke about,
Spoiling each smoker's pipe, and cunningly,
Though blind-fold, seen to pick each bald-head out,
And put each bashful maiden to the rout;
The "fiery parrot" too, a laughing scene,
Where two maids on a sheet invite the lout,
Thrown o'er a water-tub, to sit between,
And as he drops they rise, and let him swearing in.

LI.

The "dusty miller" playing many a rig;
And the "Scotch pedlars," with their jokes and fun;
The "booted hogs drove over Lunnon brig,"
Boys, who had mischief in the harvest done,
As loads o'erturn'd, and foul on posts had run;
And brandy-burning ghosts most deadly blue,
That each old woman did with terror shun;
These with the rest did Lubin yearly view,
And join'd his mirth and fears with the low vulgar crew.

LII.

To close the ranting night, the master's health
Went round in bumping horns to every swain,
Who wish'd him best of crops t' increase his wealth,
And's merry sport when harvest came again;
And all in chorus rallied out amain:
The harvest-song (a tugging pull) begun,
Each ere its end the brimming horn must drain,
Or have it fill'd again—there lay the fun,
Till Hodge went drunk to bed, and morts of things were done.

LIII.

Oh, dear to Lubin autumn's changing cloud,
Where shade and sunshine every minute sees;
And each rude-risen tempest, beetling loud,
Own'd every murmur his wild ear to please,
Sughing its vengeance through the yellow trees,
Pattering the acorns from their cups adown,
Fanning the sere leaf far upon the leas;
And picturesque to him each scrambling clown,
Tearing the woods among to search the nut-bunch brown.

LIV.

How would he wander round the woods, the plains,
When every flower from nature's wreath had fled;
Tracing the shower-bedimpled sandy lanes,
And winding fountains to their infant bed,
With many a flag and rushy bunch bespread;
Marking each curdle boil and boil away,
And bubbles guggling born, that swell'd and fled
Like changing scenes in life's ephemeron-day:
Thus Lubin paus'd o'er all, and cheer'd his lonely way.

LV.

A solitaire through autumn's wan decay,
He heard the tootling robin sound her knell,
Observ'd the sun more coy to slink away,
And lingering oak-shade how it brown'd and fell;
And many a way of nature he could tell,
That secrets are to undiscerning eyes,
As how the bee most careful clos'd her cell,
The mouse with far-fetch'd ear his hole supplies,
And moles root deeper down, from winter's frowning skies.

LVI.

And he could tell how the shy squirrel far'd,
Who often stood its busy toils to see;
How against winter it was well prepar'd
With many a store in hollow root or tree,
As if being told what winter's wants would be:
Its nuts and acorns he would often find,
And hips and haws too, heaped plenteously
In snug warm corner that broke off the wind;
With leafy nest made nigh, that warm green mosses lin'd.

LVII.

'Twas thus his fond inquiry us'd to trace
Through nature's secrets with unwearied eye,
And watch the shifting seasons' changing grace;
Spring's first wild flower, and summer's painted sky,
The insect creeping, and the birds that fly;
The autumn's dying breeze; the winter-wind,
That bellow'd round his hut most mournfully:
And as his years increas'd his taste refin'd,
And fancy with new charms enlighten'd up his mind.

LVIII.

Beauty 'gan look too witching on his eye;
The sweetest image seen in nature's glass:
A swelling bosom 'neath its lily dye,
Without admiring, Lubin could not pass;
And downcast eye, and blush of shanny lass,
Had every power his heart to hold in thrall.
O beauteous woman! still thy charms surpass:
In spite of all thy failings and thy fall,
Thou art the comfort still that cheers this earthly ball.

LIX.

Sure 'twas an oversight in nature's plan,
Such loveliness, that claims the tenderest care,
To leave defenceless with ungrateful man,
Such harden'd brutes as but too many are.
O pleasing flowers! as frail as ye are fair;
Sure some that live have souls to feel and sigh,
When, shrinking 'neath the storms ye cannot bear,
Your beauteous buds bow down to fade and die,
While not one pitying tear melts your seducer's eye.

LX.

Full oft, to see their witcheries divine,
He'd mix in circles which their charms did grace,
And merry groups he now began to join;
And though his heart denied to own its case,
It oft was smitten with a beauty's face,
And throbb'd with thrilling aggravating pain:
And many a long, long day has taken place,
Ere he forgot, and met his peace again,
While oft in beauty's praise he humm'd his amorous strain.

LXI.

He knew the manners too of merry rout;
Statute and feast his village yearly knew;
And glorious revels too without a doubt
Such pastimes were to Hob, and Nell, and Sue,
Milkmaids and clowns that statute-joys pursue,
And rattle off, like hogs to London mart:
Weary of old, they seek for places new,
Where men hail maidens with a frothing quart,
And Hodge with sweetheart fix'd forgets his plough and cart:—

LXII.

Where cakes, and nuts, and gingerbread and all,
Tempt clowns to buy; and far more tempting still,
Where shining ribbons dizen out the stall,
And wenches drag poor sheepish Bob or Bill
Some long, long dallied promise to fulfil;
New wreath or bow for Sunday cap to buy—
"If yah set any store by one yah will!"
Each draws his purse, and makes them no reply,
But thinks returns ere long will suit, for clowns are sly.

LXIII.

And there the ballad-singers rave and rant,
And Hodge, whose pockets won't stand treats more high,
Hears which his simpering lass may please to want,
And, brushing through the crowd most manfully,
Outs with his pence the pleasing song to buy,
And crams it in her hand with many a smile;
The trifling present makes the maid comply
To promise him her company the while,
And strutting on at night he hands her o'er the stile.

LXIV.

Here the poor sailor, with his hat in hand,
Hops through the crowd that wonderfully stares,
To hear him talk of things in foreign land,
'Bout thundering cannons and most bloody wars;
And as he stops to shew his seamy scars,
Pity soon meets the ploughman's penny then:
The sailor heartfelt thankfulness declares,
"God blesses" all, and styles them "gentlemen,"
And fobs his money up, and 'gins his tale agen.

LXV.

Here's "Civil Will" too, with his "pins and pegs,"
And he makes glorious fun among the chaps:
"Boys, miss my pegs," he cries, "and hit my legs,
"My timbers well can stand your gentle taps,"
Though sure enough he gets most ugly raps,
For here the rustic thinks the sports abound;
Whose aim at "Civil's" legs his fellows caps
Meets most applause—still "poor Will" stands his ground,
"Boys throw your copper salve, and make another wound."

LXVI.

But soldiers, they're the boys to make a rout,
With boasting bottle brimm'd with gin and rum,
The high-crown'd cap with ribbons hung about,
The tuteling fife, and hoarse rap-tapping drum:
Lud, clowns are almost mad where'er they come;
They're like so many kings 'mong country folk,
They push their beer like water round the room,
Who will and welcome there may drink and smoke,
Though chaps have often found they dearly sell a joke.

LXVII.

The bumptious serjeant struts before his men,
And "clear the road, young whopstraws!" will he say;
And looks as big as if king George himsen,
And wields his sword around to make a way:
With lace and ribbons dizen'd out so gay,
So flashing smart—full oft, as well's the swain,
The tempted maid his finery does betray,
Who leaves poor slighted Hodge behind in pain,
And many a chiding dame to sorrow and complain.

LXVIII.

And Lubin heard the echoing rabble-fight,
When men and maids were hir'd, and sports did close,
And wenches sought their sweethearts up at night,
And found 'em drunk, bedeck'd with soldier's clothes;
As they would pull and scold great tumults rose;
The serjeant's honour totter'd terribly,
From women's threat'nings hardly 'scap'd with blows;
—They'd box his cap about his ears, if he
Gave not the contest up, and set the prisoner free.

LXIX.

Some homeward-bound were coupled, maid and swain,
And Dick from Dolly now for gifts did sue,
He'd giv'n her ribbons, and he deem'd again
Some kind return as nothing but his due;
And he told things that ploughmen little knew,
Of bleeding hearts and pains—a mighty spell!
Her Sunday-clothes might damage with the dew,
She quite forgot them while he talk'd so well;
And listened to his tales, till darkness round them fell.

LXX.

The statute nam'd, each servant's day of fun,
The village-feast next warms the muse's song;
'Tis Lubin's sphere, a thresher's lowly son;
Though little used to mix such routs among,
Such fitting subjects to the theme belong:
As pictur'd landscapes, destitute of trees,
Would doubtlessly be fancied painted wrong,
So lowly rural subjects, such as these,
Must have their simple ways discerning eyes to please.

LXXI.

The lovely morn in July's blushes rose,
That brought the yearly feast and holiday,
When villagers put on their bran-new clothes,
And milk-maids, drest like any ladies gay,
Threw "cotton drabs" and "worsted hose" away,
And left their pails unscour'd, well pleas'd I ween
To join the dance where gipsy fiddlers play,
Accompanied with thumping tambourine,
From night till morning-light upon the rushy green.

LXXII.

Where the fond swain delighteth in the chance
To meet the sun-tann'd lass he dearly loves;
And, as he leads her down the giddy dance,
With many a token his fond passion proves,
Squeezing her hands, or catching at her gloves,
And stealing kisses as chance prompts the while;
With eye fixt on her as she graceful moves,
To catch if such fond fancies her beguile,—
When happily her heart confesses in a smile.

LXXIII.

O rural love! as spotless as the dove's;
No wealth gives fuel to a borrow'd flame,
To prompt the shepherd where to choose his loves,
And go a forger of that sacred name;
Both hearts in unison here beat the same;
Here nature makes the choice which love inspires:
Far from the wedded lord and haughty dame
This boon of heavenly happiness retires,
Not felon-like law-bound, but wedded in desires.

LXXIV.

The woodman and the thresher now are found
Mixing and making merry with their friends;
Children and kin, from neighbouring towns around
Each at the humble banquet pleas'd attends:
For though no costliness the feast pretends,
Yet something more than common they provide;
And the good dame her small plum-pudding sends
To sons and daughters fast in service tied,
With many a cordial gift of good advice beside.

LXXV.

'Tis pleasing then to view the cotter's cheer,
To mark his gentle and his generous mind;
How free he is to push about his beer;
And well 's he knows, with ceremony kind,
Bids help themselves to such as they may find;
Tells them they're welcome as the flowers in May:
And, full of merrimental cheer inclin'd,
Drinks healths, and sings when supper's clear'd away,
And hopes they all may meet on next year's holiday.

LXXVI.

And then for sake of 's boys and wenches dear,
Gives leave a dancing in his hut shall be;
While he sits smoking in his elbow-chair,
As pleas'd as Punch his children round to see,
With each a sweetheart frisking merrily.
"God bless ye all!" quoth he, and drinks his beer,
"My boys and wenches ye're a pride to me:
"Lead but an honest life—no matter where,
"And do as I have done, and ye'll have nought to fear.

LXXVII.

"To bring ye up, from toil I never flinch'd,
"Or fail'd to do the thing that's just and right;
"Your mother knows ourselves were often pinch'd,
"To fill your bellies and to keep ye tight:
"May God look down and bless ye all this night!
"May wives and husbands here, that are to be,
"Instead of sorrows prove your heart's delight!—
"I've brought ye up, expect no more from me,
"So take your trundle now, and good luck may ye see!"

LXXVIII.

Thus talk'd the father to his pipe and beer,
For those whom he'd admonish were the while
Too occupied in dancing him to hear;
Yet still with talk and beer he does beguile
His short releasement from his cares and toil;
Till Sir John's spirit stops his merry glee
And lays him quiet down:—his children smile,
Break up the dance, and pay the fiddler's fee,
And then the lass he loves each swain pulls on his knee.

LXXIX.

And the long rural string of merry games,
That at such outings maketh much ado,
All were to Lubin's skill familiar names;
And he could tell each whole performance through,
As plann'd and practis'd by the jovial crew:
—Great sport to them was jumping in a sack,
For beaver hat bedeck'd with ribbons blue;
Soon one bumps down as though he'd broke his neck,
Another tries to rise, and wondrous sport they make.

LXXX.

And monstrous fun it makes to hunt the pig,
As soapt and larded through the crowd he flies:
Thus turn'd adrift he plays them many a rig;
A pig for catching is a wondrous prize,
And every lout to do his utmost tries;
Some snap the ear, and some the curly tail,
But still his slippery hide all hold denies;
While old men tumbled down sore hurts bewail,
And boys bedaub'd with muck run home with piteous tale.

LXXXI.

And badger-baiting here, and fighting cocks—
But sports too barbarous these for Lubin's strains:
And red-fac'd wenches, for the Holland smocks,
Oft puff and pant along the smooth green plains;
Where Hodge feels most uncomfortable pains
To see his love lag hindmost in the throng,
And of unfairness in her cause complains;
And swears and fights the jarring chaps among,
As in her part he'd die, 'fore they his lass should wrong.

LXXXII.

And long-ear'd racers, fam'd for sport and fun,
Appear this day to have their swiftness try'd;
Where some won't start, and "Dick's," the race
nigh won,
Enamour'd of some "Jenny" by his side,
Forgets the winning-post to court a bride;
In vain the mob urge on the jockey-clown
To lump his cudgel on his harden'd hide,
Ass after ass still hee-haws through the town,
And in disgrace at last each jockey bumps adown.

LXXXIII.

And then the noisy rout, their sports to crown,
Form round the ring superior strength to show,
Where wrestlers join to tug each other down,
And thrust and kick with hard revengeful blow,
Till through their worsted hose the blood does flow:
For ploughmen would not wish for higher fame,
Than be the champion all the rest to throw;
And thus to add such honours to his name,
He kicks, and tugs, and bleeds to win the glorious
game.

LXXXIV.

And when the night draws on, each mirthful lout
The ale-house seeks, and sets it in a roar;
And there, while fiddlers play, they rant about,
And call for brimming tankards frothing o'er:
For clouds of smoke ye'd hardly see the door;
No stint they make of 'bacco and of beer;
While money lasts they shout about for more,
Resolv'd to keep it merry when it's here,—
As toils come every day, and feasts but once a year.

LXXXV.

With village-merriments digress'd awhile,
We now resume poor Lubin's joys again,
And haply find him bending o'er a stile,
Or stretch'd in sabbath-musings on the plain,
Looking around and humming o'er a strain;
Painting the foliage of the woodland trees;
List'ning a bird that's lost its nest complain;
Noting the hummings of the passing bees,
And all the lovely things his musing hears and sees.

LXXXVI.

Where ling-clad heaths and pastures now may spread,
He oft has heard of castle and of hall;
And curiosity his steps hath led
To gaze on some old arch or fretting wall,
Where ivy scrambles up to stop the fall:
There would he sit him down, and look, and sigh,
And by-gone days back to his mind would call,
The bloody-warring times of chivalry,
When Danes' invading routs made unarm'd Britons fly.

LXXXVII.

He lov'd to view the mossy-arched brigs,—
Bending o'er wall or rail, the pits or springs
Below to mark,—where willow's dripping twigs
To summer's silken zephyrs' feeblest wings
Bent in the flood, and curv'd its thousand rings;
And where the sun-beam twitter'd on the walls;
And nodding bulrush down its drowk head hings;
And down the rock the shallow water falls,
Wild fluttering through the stones in feeble whimpering brawls.

LXXXVIII.

And oft, with shepherds leaning o'er their hooks,
He'd stand conjecturing on the ruins round:
Though little skill'd in antiquated books,
Their knowledge in such matters seem'd profound;
And they would preach of what did once abound,
Castles deep moated round, old haunted hall—
And something like to moats still 'camp the ground,
Where beneath Cromwell's rage the towers did fall;
But ivy creeps the hill, and ruin hides it all.

LXXXIX.

And ancient songs he hung enraptur'd on,
Which herdsmen on a hill have sat to sing,
'Bout feats of Robin Hood and Little John,
Whose might was fear'd by country and by king,
Such strength had they to twitch the thrumming string;
Their darts oft suck'd the life-blood of the deer;
And Sherwood Forest with their horns did ring.
Ah, these were songs which he would joy to hear,
And these were such as warm'd when antique scenes appear.

XC.

But who can tell the anguish of his mind,
When reformation's formidable foes
With civil wars 'gainst nature's peace combin'd,
And desolation struck her deadly blows,
As curst improvement 'gan his fields inclose:
O greens, and fields, and trees, farewel, farewel!
His heart-wrung pains, his unavailing woes
No words can utter, and no tongue can tell,
When ploughs destroy'd the green, when groves of willows fell.

XCI.

There once were springs, when daisies' silver studs
Like sheets of snow on every pasture spread;
There once were summers, when the crow-flower buds
Like golden sunbeams brightest lustre shed;
And trees grew once that shelter'd Lubin's head;
There once were brooks sweet whimpering down the yale:
The brooks no more—kingcup and daisy fled;
Their last fallen tree the naked moors bewail,
And scarce a bush is left to tell the mournful tale.

XCII.

Yon shaggy tufts, and many a rushy knot
Existing still in spite of spade and plough,
As seeming fond and loth to leave the spot,
Tell where was once the green—brown fallows now,
Where Lubin often turns a sadden'd brow,
Marks the stopt brook, and mourns oppression's power;
And thinks how once he waded in each slough,
To crop the yellow "horse-blob's" early flower,
Or catch the "miller's-thumb" in summer's sultry hour.

XCIII.

There once were days, the woodman knows it well,
When shades e'en echoed with the singing thrush;
There once were hours, the ploughman's tale can tell,
When morning's beauty wore its earliest blush,
How woodlarks carol'd from each stumpy bush;
Lubin himself has mark'd them soar and sing:
The thorns are gone, the woodlark's song is hush,
Spring more resembles winter now than spring,
The shades are banish'd all—the birds have took to wing.

XCIV.

There once were lanes in nature's freedom dropt,
There once were paths that every valley wound,—
Inclosure came, and every path was stopt;
Each tyrant fix'd his sign where paths were found,
To hint a trespass now who cross'd the ground:
Justice is made to speak as they command;
The high road now must be each stinted bound:
—Inclosure, thou'rt a curse upon the land,
And tasteless was the wretch who thy existence plann'd.

XCV.

O England! boasted land of liberty,
With strangers still thou mayst thy title own,
But thy poor slaves the alteration see,
With many a loss to them the truth is known:
Like emigrating bird thy freedom's flown;
While mongrel clowns, low as their rooting plough,
Disdain thy laws to put in force their own;
And every village owns its tyrants now,
And parish-slaves must live as parish-kings allow.

XCVI.

Ye fields, ye scenes so dear to Lubin's eye,
Ye meadow-blooms, ye pasture-flowers, farewel!
Ye banish'd trees, ye make me deeply sigh,—
Inclosure came, and all your glories fell:
E'en the old oak that crown'd yon rifled dell,
Whose age had made it sacred to the view,
Not long was left his children's fate to tell;
Where ignorance and wealth their course pursue,
Each tree must tumble down—old "Lea-close Oak," adieu!

XCVII.

Lubin beheld it all, and, deeply pain'd,
Along the paled road would muse and sigh;
The only path that freedom's rights maintain'd:
The naked scenes drew pity from his eye,
Tears dropt to memory of delights gone by;
The haunts of freedom, cowherd's wattled bower,
And shepherd's huts, and trees that tower'd high,
And spreading thorns that turn'd a summer shower,
All captives lost, and past to sad oppression's power.

XCVIII.

And oft with shepherds he would sit, to sigh
O'er past delights of many a by-gone day,
And look on scenes now naked to the eye,
And talk as how they once were clothed gay;
And how the runnel wound its weedy way,
And how the willows on its margin grew;
Talk o'er with them the rural feats of May,—
Who got the blossoms 'neath the morning dew
That the last garland made, and where such blossoms grew:

XCIX.

And how he could remember well, when he
Laden with blooming treasures from the plain
Has mixt with them beneath a dotterel-tree,
Driv'n from his cowslips by a hasty rain,
And heard them there sing each delightful strain;
And how with tales what joys they us'd to wake;
Wishing with them such days would come again:
They lov'd the artless boy for talking's sake,
And said some future day a wondrous man he'd make.

C.

And you, poor ragged outcasts of the land,
That lug your shifting camps from green to green,
He lov'd to see your humble dwellings stand,
And thought your groups did beautify the scene:
Though blam'd for many a petty theft you've been,
Poor wandering souls, to fate's hard want decreed,
Doubtless too oft such acts your ways bemean;
But oft in wrong your foes 'gainst you proceed,
And brand a gipsy's camp when others do the deed.

CI.

Lubin would love to list their gibberish talk,
And view the oddity their ways display;
And oft with boys pursued his Sunday walk,
Where warp'd the camp beneath the willows grey,
And its black tenants on the green-sward lay;
While, on two forked sticks with cordage tied,
Their pot o'er pilfer'd fuel boils away,
With food of sheep that of red-water died,
Or any nauseous thing their frowning fates provide.

CII.

Yet oft they gather money by their trade,
And on their fortune-telling art subsist:
Where her long-hoarded groat oft brings the maid,
And secret slives it in the sybil's fist
To buy good luck and happiness—to list,
What occupies a wench's every thought,
Who is to be the man:—while, as she wist,
The gipsy's tale with swains and wealth is fraught,
The lass returns well-pleas'd, and thinks all cheaply bought.

CIII.

In summer, Lubin oft has mark'd and seen
How eagerly the village-maids pursue
Their Sunday rambles where the camps have been;
And how they give their money to the crew
For idle stories they believe as true;
Crossing their hands with coin or magic stick,
How quak'd the young to hear what things they knew;
While old experienc'd dames saw through the trick,
Who said that all their skill was borrow'd from Old Nick.

CIV.

And thus the superstitious dread their harm,
And dare not fail relieving the distrest,
Lest they within their cot should leave a charm,
To let nought prosper and bring on some pest:
Of depth of cunning gipsies are possest,
And when such weakness in a dame they find,
Forsooth they prove a terrifying guest;
And though not one to charity inclin'd,
They mutter black revenge, and force her to be kind.

CV.

His native scenes! O sweet endearing sound;
Sure never beats a heart, howe'er forlorn,
But the warm'd breast has soft emotions found
To cherish the dear spot where he was born:
E'en the poor hedger, in the early morn
Chopping the pattering bushes hung with dew,
Scarce lays his mitten on a branching thorn,
But painful memory's banish'd thoughts in view
Remind him, when 'twas young, what happy days he knew.

CVI.

When the old shepherd with his woolly locks
Crosses the green, past joys his eyes will fill,
Where when a boy he us'd to tend his flocks;
Each fringed rushy bed and swelling hill,
Where he has play'd, or stretch'd him at his will,
Freshening anew in life's declining years,
Will jog his memory with its pleasures still.
O how the thought his native scenes endears;
No spot throughout the world so pleasingly appears.

CVII.

The toil-worn thresher, in his little cot
Whose roof did shield his birth, and still remains
His dwelling place, how rough soe'er his lot,
His toil though hard, and small the wage he gains
That many a child most piningly maintains;
Send him to distant scenes and better fare,
How would his bosom yearn with parting-pains;
How would he turn and look, and linger there,
And wish e'en now his cot and poverty to share.

CVIII.

How dear the soldier feels the relic prove
Taken from home, or giv'n by love's sweet hand;
A box that bears the motto of true love—
How will he take his quid, and musing stand,
Think on his native lass and native land,
And bring to mind all those past joys again
From which wild youth so foolish was trepann'd;
Kissing the pledge that doth these ways retain,
While fancy points the spot far o'er the barring main.

CIX.

O dear delightful spots, his native place!
How Lubin look'd upon the days gone by;
How he, though young, would past delights retrace,
Bend o'er gull'd holes where stood his trees, and sigh,
With tears the while bemoist'ning in his eye;
How look'd he for the green, a green no more;
Mourning to scenes that made him no reply,
Save the strong accents they in memory bore,
"Our scenes that charm'd thy youth are dead, to bloom no more."

CX.

O samely naked leas, so bleak, so strange!
How would he wander o'er ye to complain,
And sigh, and wish he ne'er had known the change,
To see the ploughshare bury all the plain,
And not a cowslip on its lap remain;
The rush-tuft gone that hid the skylark's nest:
Ah, when will May-morn hear such strains again;
The storms beat chilly on its naked breast,
No shelter grows to shield, no home invites to rest.

CXI.

"Ah," would he sigh, "ye, 'neath the church-yard grass,
"Ye sleeping shepherds, could ye rise again,
"And see what since your time has come to pass,
"See not a bush nor willow now remain,
"Looking and list'ning for the brook in vain,—
"Ye'd little think such was your natal scene;
"Ye'd little now distinguish field from plain,
"Or where to look for each departed green;
"All plough'd and buried now, as though there nought had been."

CXII.

But still they beam'd with beauties on his eye;
No other scenes were half so sweet to view;
And other flowers but strove in vain to vie
With his few tufts that 'scap'd the wreck and grew;
And skylarks too their singing might pursue,
To claim his praise—he could but only say,
Their songs were sweet, but not like those he knew,
That charm'd his native plains at early day,
Whose equals ne'er were found where'er his steps might stray.

CXIII.

When distant village feast or noisy fair
Short absence from his fields did him detain,
How would he feel when home he did repair,
And mix among his joys—the white-spire vane
Meeting his eye above the elms again:
Leaving his friends in the sweet summer-night,
No longer lost on unknown field or plain,
Far from the path with well-known haunts in sight,
He'd stray for scatter'd flowers with added new delight.

CXIV.

As travellers return'd from foreign ground
Feel more endearments for their native earth,
So Lubin cherish'd from each weary round
Still warmer fondness for those scenes of mirth,
Those plains, and that dear cot that gave him birth;
And oft this warmness for his fields he'd own,
Mix'd with his friends around the cottage-hearth,
Relating all the travels he had known,
And that he'd seen no spot so lovely as his own.

CXV.

Nor has his taste with manhood e'er declin'd:
You still may see him on his lonely way,
O'er stile or gate in thoughtful mood reclin'd;
Or 'long the road with folded arms to stray,
Mixing with autumn's sighs or summer gay;
And curious, nature's secrets to explore,
Brushing the twigs of woods or copse away,
To roam the lonely shade so silent o'er,
Sweet muttering all his joys where clowns intrude no more.

CXVI.

Ah, who can tell the anxiousness of mind,
As now he doth to manhood's cares aspire;
The future blessings which he hopes to find,
The wish'd-for prospects of his heart's desire;
And how chill fear oft damps the glowing fire,
And o'er hope's sunshine spreads a cloudy gloom:
Yet foil'd and foil'd, hopes still his songs inspire;
And, like the daisy on the cotter's tomb,
In melancholy scenes he 'joys his cheerless bloom.

CXVII.

He has his friends, compar'd to foes though few,
And like a corn-flower in a field of grain
'Mong many a foe his wild weeds ope to view,
And malice mocks him with a rude disdain;
Proving pretensions to the muse as vain,
They deem her talents far beyond his skill,
And hiss his efforts as some forged strain:
But as hopes smile their tongues shall all be still,
E'en envy turns a friend when she's no power to kill.

CXVIII.

Ah, as the traveller from the mountain-top
Looks down on misty kingdoms spread below,
And meditates beneath the steepy drop
What life and lands exist, and rivers flow;
How fain that hour the anxious soul would know
Of all his eye beholds—but 'tis in vain:
So Lubin eager views this world of woe,
And wishes time her secrets would explain,
If he may live for joys or sink in 'whelming pain.

CXIX.

Fate's close-kept thoughts within her bosom hide;
She is no gossip, secrets to betray:
Time's steady movements must her end decide,
And leave him painful still to hope the day,
And grope through ignorance his doubtful way,
By wisdom disregarded, fools annoy'd.
And if no worth anticipates the lay,
Then let his childish notions be destroy'd,
And he his time employ as erst it was employ'd.

POEMS.

EFFUSION.

Ah, little did I think in time that's past,
By summer burnt, or numb'd by winter's blast,
Delving the ditch a livelihood to earn,
Or lumping corn out in a dusty barn;
With aching bones returning home at night,
And sitting down with weary hand to write;
Ah, little did I think, as then unknown,
Those artless rhymes I even blush'd to own
Would be one day applauded and approv'd,
By learning notic'd, and by genius lov'd.
God knows, my hopes were many, but my pain
Damp'd all the prospects which I hop'd to gain;
I hardly dar'd to hope.—Thou corner-chair,
In which I've oft slung back in deep despair,

Hadst thou expression, thou couldst easy tell
The pains and all that I have known too well:
'Twould be but sorrow's tale, yet still 'twould be
A tale of truth, and passing sweet to me.
How oft upon my hand I've laid my head,
And thought how poverty deform'd our shed;
Look'd on each parent's face I fain had cheer'd,
Where sorrow triumph'd, and pale want appear'd;
And sigh'd, and hop'd, and wish'd some day would come,
When I might bring a blessing to their home,—
That toil and merit comforts had in store,
To bid the tear defile their cheeks no more.
Who that has feelings would not wish to be
A friend to parents, such as mine to me,
Who in distress broke their last crust in twain,
And though want pinch'd, the remnant broke again,
And still, if craving of their scanty bread,
Gave their last mouthful that I might be fed?
Nor for their own wants tear-drops follow'd free,
Worse anguish stung—they had no more for me.

And now hope's sun is looking brighter out,
And spreading thin the clouds of fear and doubt,
That long in gloomy sad suspense to me
Hid the long-waited smiles I wish'd to see.
And now, my parents, helping you is sweet,—
The rudest havoc fortune could complete;
A piteous couple, little blest with friends,
Where pain and poverty have had their ends.
I'll be thy crutch, my father, lean on me;
Weakness knits stubborn while its bearing thee:
And hard shall fall the shock of fortune's frown,
To eke thy sorrows, ere it breaks me down.
My mother, too, thy kindness shall be met,
And ere I'm able will I pay the debt;
For what thou'st done, and what gone through for me,
My last-earn'd sixpence will I break with thee:
And when my dwindled sum won't more divide,
Then take it all—to fate I'll leave the rest;
In helping thee I'll always feel a pride,
Nor think I'm happy till ye both are blest.

ADDRESS TO MY FATHER,

ON HIS RECEIVING AN EASY CHAIR FROM THE RIGHT HON. LADY ———.

CALM resignation meets a happy end;
And Providence, long-trusted, brings a friend.
God's will be done, be patient and be good;
Elisha was, and ravens brought him food:
And so wast thou, my father,—fate's decree
Doom'd many evils should encompass thee;
And, like Elisha, though it met thee late,
Patience unwearied did not vainly wait.
Thou hast, my father, long been us'd to pine,
And patient borne thy pain; great pain was thine.
Thou hast submitted, ah, and thou hast known
The roughest storms that life has ever blown,
Yet met them like a lamb: thou wert resign'd,
And though thou pray'dst a better place to find,

'Twas nought presumptuous—meekly wouldst thou crave,
When pains rack'd sore, some easement in the grave;
To lay thy aching body down in peace,
Where want and pain, poor man's tormentors, cease.
'Twas all thy wish—and not till lately wish'd,
When age came on, and pain thy strength had crush'd.
There stood thy children, "ah," thou oft wouldst sigh,
"Let's see my babes brought up, and let me die.
"Though what I do brings them but little food,
"It better keeps them than a workhouse would.
"I've small enticement in this world to find,
"But could not rest if they were left behind."—
Bless thee, my father! thou'st been kind to me,
And God, who saw it, will be kind to thee.
Now pain has mark'd thee long with age's scars,
And age with double blow thy end prepares,—
A crooked wreck, the trace of what has been,
Toil, want, and pain, now but too plainly seen,—

Thou'st met with friends who joy to damp despair,
And when most needed brought thy easy chair;
An easy seat thy wasted form to bless,
And make thy useless limbs to pain thee less:
O mayst thou long enjoy the comfort given,
Live long to bless them who the deed have done;
Then change thy earthly pains for joys in heaven!—
So beats the bosom of thy only son,
Whose bliss is at its height, whose long hope's crown'd,
To prove, when wanted most, thy friends are found.

HOLYWELL.

NATURE, thou accept the song,
To thee the simple lines belong,
Inspir'd as brushing hill and dell
I stroll'd the way to Holywell.

Though 'neath young April's watery sky,
The sun gleam'd warm, and roads were dry;
And though the valleys, bush, and tree
Still naked stood, yet on the lea
A flush of green, and fresh'ning glow,
In melting patches 'gan to show
That swelling buds would soon again
In summer's livery bless the plain.
The thrushes too 'gan clear their throats,
And got by heart some two 'r three notes
Of their intended summer-song,
To cheer me as I stroll'd along.
The wild heath triumph'd in its scenes
Of goss and ling's perpetual greens;
And just to say that spring was come,
The violet left its woodland home,
And, hermit-like, from storms and wind
Sought the best shelter it could find,
'Neath long grass banks, with feeble powers
Peeping faintly purple flowers:

While oft unhous'd from beds of ling
The fluskering pheasant took to wing;
And bobbing rabbits, wild and shy,
Their white tails glancing on the eye,
Just prick'd their long ears list'ning round,
And sought their coverts under-ground.
The heath was left, and then at will
A road swept gently round the hill,
From whose high crown, as soodling by,
A distant prospect cheer'd my eye,
Of closes green and fallows brown;
And distant glimpse of cot and town;
And steeple beck'ning on the sight,
By morning sun-beams painted white;
And darksome woods with shadings sweet,
To make the landscape round complete;
And distant waters glist'ning by,
As if the ground were patch'd with sky:
While on the blue horizon's line
The far-off things did dimly shine,

Which wild conjecture only sees,
And fancy moulds to clouds and trees,
Thinking, if thither she could fly,
She'd find the close of earth and sky;
But as we turn to look again
On nearer objects, wood and plain,
(So truths than fiction lovelier seem,)
One warms as wak'ning from a dream.
From covert hedge, on either side,
The blackbirds flutter'd terrified,
Mistaking me for pilfering boy
That doth too oft their nests destroy;
And "prink, prink, prink," they took to wing,
In snugger shades to build and sing.
From tufted grass or bush, the hare
Oft sprung from her endanger'd lair;
Surprise was startled on her rout,
So near one's feet she bolted out.
The sun each tree-top mounted o'er,
And got church-steeple height or more;

And as I soodled on and on,
The ground was warm to look upon,
It e'en invited one to rest,
And have a nap upon its breast;
But thought upon my journey's end,
Where doubtful fancies did depend,
Urg'd on my lazy feet to roam,
Like truant school-boy kept from home.
I ope'd each gate with idle swing,
And stood to listen ploughmen sing;
While cracking whip and jingling gears
Recall'd the toils of boyish years,
When, like to them, I took my rounds
O'er elting moulds of fallow grounds,—
With feet nigh shoeless, paddling through
The bitterest blasts that ever blew;
And napless beaver, weather'd brown,
That want oft wore without its crown;
A poor, unfriended, ragged boy,
Prest ere a child with man's employ.

'Tis past—'tis gone!—in musings lost
So thought I, leaning o'er the post;
And even jump'd with joy to see
Kind fate so highly favour me,—
To clear the storms of boyish hours,
And manhood's opening strew with flowers;
To bid such hopes man's summer blow,
As boy's weak spring dare never sow;
And every day desires, at will,
To make each hope bloom brighter still.
With joys as sweet as heart could melt,
With feelings dear as e'er were felt,
I met at last, as like a spell,
The 'witching views of Holywell;
Where hills tower'd high their crowns with pride,
And vales dropp'd headlong by their side,
Bestriped with shades of green and gray,
The fir-tree and the naked spray;
While, underneath their mingling grains,
The river silver'd down the plains,

And bolted on the stranger's sight,
As stars blink out from clouds at night.
Beside the stream a cotter's shed
Low in the hollow heav'd its head:
Its tenants seem'd as snug to dwell
As lives a bee within its cell;
Its chimney-top high ash embowers;
Beside its wall the river pours
Its guggling sounds in whirling sweep,
That e'en might lull a child to sleep.
Before the door, with paths untraced,
The green-sward many a beauty graced;
And daisy there, and cowslip too,
And buttercups of golden hue,
The children meet as soon as sought,
And gain their wish as soon as thought;
Who oft I ween, the children's way,
Will leap the threshold's bounds to play,
And spite of parent's chiding calls
Will straggle where the water falls,

And 'neath the hanging bushes creep
For violet-bud and primrose-peep,
And sigh with anxious, eager dream,
For water-blobs amid the stream;
And up the hill-side turn anon,
To pick the daisies one by one:
Then anxious to their cottage bound,
To show the prize their searches found,
Whose medley flowers, red, white, and blue,
As well can please their parents too;
And as their care and skill contrive,
In flower-pots many a day survive.

Ah, thus conjecturing, musing still,
I cast a look from off the hill,
And loll'd me 'gainst a propping tree,
And thought for them as 'twas with me:
I did the same in April time,
And spoilt the daisy's earliest prime;

Robb'd every primrose root I met,
And oft-times got the root to set;
And joyful home each nosegay bore;
And felt—as I shall feel no more.

DESCRIPTION OF A THUNDER-STORM.

Slow boiling up, on the horizon's brim,
Huge clouds arise, mountainous, dark and grim,
Sluggish and slow upon the air they ride,
As pitch-black ships o'er the blue ocean glide;
Curling and hovering o'er the gloomy south,
As curls the sulphur from the cannon's mouth.
More grizly in the sun the tempest comes,
And through the wood with threatened vengeance
hums;

Hissing more loud and loud among the trees :—
The frighted wild-wind trembles to a breeze,
Just turns the leaf in terrifying sighs,
Bows to the spirit of the storm, and dies.
In wild pulsations beats the heart of fear,
At the low rumbling thunder creeping near.
The poplar leaf now resteth on its tree;
And the mill-sail, once twirling rapidly,
Lagging and lagging till each breeze had dropt,
Abruptly now in hesitation stopt.
The very cattle gaze upon the gloom,
And seemly dread the threat'ned fate to come.
The little birds sit mute within the bush,
And nature's very breath is stopt and hush.
The shepherd leaves his unprotected flock,
And flies for shelter in some scooping rock;
There hides in fear from the dread boding wrath,
Lest rocks should tremble when it sallies forth,
And that almighty Power, that bids it roar,
Hath seal'd the doom when time shall be no more.

The cotter's family cringe round the hearth,
Where all is sadden'd but the cricket's mirth;
The boys through fear in soot-black corner push,
And 'tween their father's knees for safety crush;
Each leaves his plaything on the brick-barr'd floor,
The idle top and ball can please no more,
And oft above the wheel's unceasing thrum
The murmur's heard to whisper,—" Is it come!"
The clouds more dismal darken on the eye,
More huge, more fearful, and of deeper dye;
And, as unable to light up the gloom,
The sun drops sinking in its bulging tomb.
Now as one glances sky-ward with affright,
Short vivid lightnings catch upon the sight;
While like to rumbling armies, as it were,
Th' approaching thunder mutters on the ear,
And still keeps creeping on more loud and loud,
And stronger lightnings splinter through the cloud.
An awe-struck monument of hope and fear,
Mute expectation waits the terror near,

That dreadful clap, that terminates suspense,
When ruin meets us or is banish'd hence.
The signal's given in that explosive flash,—
One moment's pause—and then the horrid crash:—
—Almighty, what a shock!—the jostled wrack
Of nature seems in mingled ruins done;
Astounded echo rives the terrors back,
And tingles on the ear a dying swoon.
Flash, peal, and flash still rend the melting cloud;
All nature seems to sigh her race is o'er,
And as she shrinks 'neath chaos' dismal shroud,
Gives meek consent that suns shall shine no more.
Where is the sinner now, with careless eye,
Will look, and say that all is chance's whim;
When hell e'en trembles at God's majesty,
And sullen owns that nought can equal him?
But clouds now melt like mercy into tears,
And nature's Lord his wrath in kindness stops:
Each trembling cotter now delighted hears
The rain fall down in heavy-pattering drops.

The sun 'gins tremble through the cloud again,
And a slow murmur wakes the delug'd plain;
A murmur of thanksgiving, mix'd with fear,
For God's great power and our deliverance here.

TO AN EARLY COWSLIP.

Cowslip bud, so early peeping,
Warm'd by April's hazard hours;
O'er thy head though sunshine's creeping,
Close the threatening tempest lowers:
Trembling blossom, let me bear thee
To a better, safer home;
Though a fairer blossom wear thee,
Never tempest there shall come:

Mary's bonny breast to charm thee,
Bosom soft as down can be,
Eyes like any suns to warm thee,
And scores of sweets unknown to me;—
Ah! for joys thou'lt there be meeting,
In a station so divine,
I could wish, what's vain repeating,
Cowslip bud, thy life were mine.

AFTER READING IN A LETTER

PROPOSALS FOR BUILDING A COTTAGE.

Beside a runnel build my shed,
With stubbles cover'd o'er;
Let broad oaks o'er its chimney spread,
And grass-plats grace the door.

The door may open with a string,
So that it closes tight;
And locks would be a wanted thing,
To keep out thieves at night.

A little garden, not too fine,
Inclose with painted pales;
And woodbines, round the cot to twine,
Pin to the wall with nails.

Let hazels grow, and spindling sedge,
Bent bowering over-head;
Dig old man's beard from woodland hedge,
To twine a summer shade.

Beside the threshold sods provide,
And build a summer seat;
Plant sweet-briar bushes by its side,
And flowers that blossom sweet.

I love the sparrow's ways to watch
Upon the cotter's sheds,
So here and there pull out the thatch,
That they may hide their heads.

And as the sweeping swallows stop
Their flights along the green,
Leave holes within the chimney-top
To paste their nest between.

Stick shelves and cupboards round the hut,
In all the holes and nooks;
Nor in the corner fail to put
A cupboard for the books.

Along the floor some sand I'll sift,
To make it fit to live in;
And then I'll thank ye for the gift,
As something worth the giving.

AUTUMN.

THE summer-flower has run to seed,
And yellow is the woodland bough;
And every leaf of bush and weed
Is tipt with autumn's pencil now.

And I do love the varied hue,
And I do love the browning plain;
And I do love each scene to view,
That's mark'd with beauties of her reign.

The woodbine-trees red berries bear,
That clustering hang upon the bower;
While, fondly lingering here and there,
Peeps out a dwindling sickly flower.

The trees' gay leaves are turned brown,
By every little wind undress'd;
And as they flap and whistle down,
We see the birds' deserted nest.

No thrush or blackbird meets the eye,
Or fills the ear with summer's strain;
They but dart out for worm and fly,
Then silent seek their rest again.

Beside the brook, in misty blue,
Bilberries glow on tendrils weak,
Where many a bare-foot splashes through,
The pulpy, juicy prize to seek:

For 'tis the rustic boy's delight,
Now autumn's sun so warmly gleams,
And these ripe berries tempt his sight,
To dabble in the shallow streams.

And oft his rambles we may trace,
Delv'd in the mud his printing feet,
And oft we meet a chubby face
All stained with the berries sweet.

The cowboy oft slives down the brook,
And tracks for hours each winding round,
While pinders, that such chances look,
Drive his rambling cows to pound.

The woodland bowers, that us'd to be
Lost in their silence and their shade,
Are now a scene of rural glee,
With many a nutting swain and maid.

The scrambling shepherd with his hook,
'Mong hazel boughs of rusty brown
That overhang some gulphing brook,
Drags the ripen'd clusters down.

While, on a bank of faded grass,
Some artless maid the prize receives;
And kisses to the sun-tann'd lass,
As well as nuts, the shepherd gives.

I love the year's decline, and love
Through rustling yellow shades to range,
O'er stubble land, 'neath willow grove,
To pause upon each varied change:

And oft have thought 'twas sweet, to list
The stubbles crackling with the heat,
Just as the sun broke through the mist
And warm'd the herdsman's rushy seat;

And grunting noise of rambling hogs,
Where pattering acorns oddly drop;
And noisy bark of shepherds' dogs,
The restless routs of sheep to stop;

While distant thresher's swingle drops
With sharp and hollow-twanking raps;
And, nigh at hand, the echoing chops
Of hardy hedger stopping gaps;

And sportsmen's trembling whistle-calls
That stay the swift retreating pack;
And cowboy's whoops, and squawking brawls,
To urge the straggling heifer back.

Autumn-time, thy scenes and shades
Are pleasing to the tasteful eye;
Though winter, when the thought pervades,
Creates an ague-shivering sigh.

Grey-bearded rime hangs on the morn,
And what's to come too true declares;
The ice-drop hardens on the thorn,
And winter's starving bed prepares.

No music's heard the fields among;
Save where the hedge-chats chittering play,
And ploughman drawls his lonely song,
As cutting short the dreary day.

Now shatter'd shades let me attend,
Reflecting look on their decline,
Where pattering leaves confess their end,
In sighing flutterings hinting mine.

For every leaf, that twirls the breeze,
May useful hints and lessons give;
The falling leaves and fading trees
Will teach and caution us to live.

" Wandering clown," they seem to say,
" In us your coming end review:
Like you we liv'd, but now decay;
The same sad fate approaches you."

Beneath a yellow fading tree,
As red suns light thee, Autumn-morn,
In wildest raptures let me see
The sweets that most thy charms adorn.

O while my eye the landscape views,
What countless beauties are display'd;
What varied tints of nameless hues,—
Shades endless melting into shade.

A russet red the hazels gain,
As suited to their drear decline;
While maples brightest dress retain,
And in the gayest yellows shine.

The poplar tree hath lost its pride;
Its leaves in wan consumption pine;
They hoary turn on either side,
And life to every gale resign.

The stubborn oak, with haughty pride
Still in its lingering green, we view;
But vain the strength he shows is tried,
He tinges slow with sickly hue.

The proudest triumph art conceives,
Or beauties nature's power can crown,
Grey-bearded time in shatters leaves;
Destruction's trample treads them down.

'Tis lovely now to turn one's eye,
The changing face of heaven to mind;
How thin-spun clouds glide swiftly by,
While lurking storms slow move behind.

Now suns are clear, now clouds pervade,
Each moment chang'd, and chang'd again;
And first a light, and then a shade,
Swift glooms and brightens o'er the plain.

Poor pussy through the stubble flies,
In vain, o'erpowering foes to shun;
The lurking spaniel points the prize,
And pussy's harmless race is run.

The crowing pheasant, in the brakes,
Betrays his lair with awkward squalls;
A certain aim the gunner takes,
He clumsy fluskers up, and falls.

But hide thee, muse, the woods among,
Nor stain thy artless, rural rhymes;
Go leave the murderer's wiles unsung,
Nor mark the harden'd gunner's crimes.

The fields all clear'd, the labouring mice
To sheltering hedge and wood patrole,
Where hips and haws for food suffice,
That chumbled lie about their hole.

The squirrel, bobbing from the eye,
Is busy now about his hoard,
And in old nest of crow or pye
His winter-store is oft explor'd.

The leaves forsake the willow grey,
And down the brook they whirl and wind;
So hopes and pleasures whirl away,
And leave old age and pain behind.

The thorns and briars, vermilion-hue,
Now full of hips and haws are seen;
If village-prophecies be true,
They prove that winter will be keen.

Hark! started are some lonely strains:
The robin-bird is urg'd to sing;
Of chilly evening he complains,
And dithering droops his ruffled wing.

Slow o'er the wood the puddock sails;
And mournful, as the storms arise,
His feeble note of sorrow wails
To the unpitying, frowning skies.

More coldly blows the autumn-breeze;
Old winter grins a blast between;
The north-winds rise and strip the trees,
And desolation shuts the scene.

BALLAD.

A WEEDLING wild, on lonely lea,
My evening rambles chanc'd to see;
And much the weedling tempted me
To crop its tender flower:

Expos'd to wind and heavy rain,
Its head bow'd lowly on the plain;
And silently it seem'd in pain
Of life's endanger'd hour.

" And wilt thou bid my bloom decay,
And crop my flower, and me betray?
And cast my injur'd sweets away,"—
Its silence seemly sigh'd—
" A moment's idol of thy mind?
And is a stranger so unkind,
To leave a shameful root behind,
Bereft of all its pride?"

And so it seemly did complain;
And beating fell the heavy rain;
And low it droop'd upon the plain,
To fate resign'd to fall:

My heart did melt at its decline,
And "Come," said I, "thou gem divine,
My fate shall stand the storm with thine;"
So took the root and all.

ON THE SIGHT OF SPRING.

How sweet it us'd to be, when April first
Unclos'd the arum-leaves, and into view
Its ear-like spindling flowers their cases burst,
Beting'd with yellowish white or lushy hue:
Though manhood now with such has small to do,
Yet I remember what delight was mine
When on my Sunday walks I us'd to go,
Flower-gathering tribes in childish bliss to join;

Peeping and searching hedge-row side or woods,
When thorns stain green with slow unclosing buds.
Ah, how delighted, humming on the time
Some nameless song or tale, I sought the flowers;
Some rushy dyke to jump, or bank to climb,
Ere I obtain'd them; while from hasty showers
Oft under trees we nestled in a ring,
Culling our "lords and ladies."—O ye hours!
I never see the broad-leav'd arum spring
Stained with spots of jet; I never see
Those dear delights which April still does bring,
But memory's tongue repeats it all to me.
I view her pictures with an anxious eye,
I hear her stories with a pleasing pain:
Youth's wither'd flowers, alas! ye make me sigh,
To think in me ye'll never bloom again.

A PASTORAL.

SURELY Lucy love returns,
Though her meaning's not reveal'd;
Surely love her bosom burns,
Which her coyness keeps conceal'd:
Else what means that flushing cheek,
When with her I chance to be?
And those looks, that almost speak
A secret warmth of love for me?

Would she, where she valued not,
Give such proofs of sweet esteem?
Think what flowers for me she's got—
What can this but fondness seem?

When, to try their pleasing powers,
Swains for her cull every grove,—
When she takes my meaner flowers,
What can guide the choice but love?

Was not love seen yesternight,
When two sheep had rambled out?
Who but Lucy set them right?
The token told, without a doubt.
When others stare, she turns and frowns;
When I but glance, a smile I see;
When others talk, she calls them clowns;
But never says such words to me.

And when, with swains to love inclin'd,
To bear her milk I often go;
Though they beg first, she turns behind,
And lingers till I ask her too:

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O'er stepping-stones that cross the brooks,
Who mind such trifles plainly see,
In vain the shepherds prop their hooks,
She always gives her hand to me.

To-day, while all were standing by,
She wish'd for roses from the bower;
The man too wish'd was in her eye,
Though others flew to get the flower:
And striving all they could to please,
When prick'd with thorns they left the tree,
She never seem'd concern'd at these,
But only turn'd to caution me.

To-day she careless view'd the bark
Where many a swain had cut her name,
'Till whisper'd which was Colin's mark,
Her cheek was instant in a flame:

In blushing beckons love did call,
And courage seiz'd the chance the while;
And though I kiss'd her 'fore them all,
Her worst rebukings wore a smile.

BALLAD.

WHERE the dark ivy the thorn-tree is mounting,
Sweet shielding in summer the nest of the dove,
There lies the sweet spot, by the side of the fountain,
That's dear to all sweetness that dwells upon love:
For there setting sunbeams, ere even's clouds close 'em,
Once stretch'd a long shadow of one I adore;
And there did I meet the sweet sighs of the bosom.
Of one ever dear, though I meet her no more.

And who with a soul, and a share of warm feeling,
And who with a heart that owns love for the fair,
Can pass by the spot where his first look was stealing,
Or first fondness ventur'd love-tales to declare?
Ah, who can pass by it, and notice it never?
Can long days forget on first fondness to call?
Sure time kindles love to burn brighter than ever,
And nature's first choice must be sweetest of all.

I prove it, sweet Mary, I prove it too truly;
That fountain, once sweeten'd with presence of thee,
As oft as I pass it at eve, and as duly
As May brings the time round, I think upon thee:
I go and I sit on the soft bed of rushes,
As nigh as remembrance the spot can decide;
There lonely I whisper, in sorrow's warm gushes,
That bliss when my Mary was plac'd by my side.

It grieves me to see the first open May-blossom;
For, Mary, if still 'tis remember'd by thee,
'Twas just then thou wish'd one to place in thy bosom,
When scarce a peep show'd itself open to me.
Each May with a tear are that flower and I parted,
As near that lov'd spot it first peeps on the bower;
"I've no cause to pluck thee," I sigh broken-hearted,
"There's no Mary nigh to be pleas'd with the flower."

SONG.

Swamps of wild rush-beds, and sloughs' squashy traces,
Grounds of rough fallows with thistle and weed,
Flats and low vallies of kingcups and daisies,
Sweetest of subjects are ye for my reed:

Ye commons left free in the rude rags of nature,
Ye brown heaths be-clothed in furze as ye be,
My wild eye in rapture adores every feature,
Ye are dear as this heart in my bosom to me.

O native endearments! I would not forsake ye,
I would not forsake ye for sweetest of scenes;
For sweetest of gardens that nature could make me,
I would not forsake ye, dear vallies and greens:
Tho' nature ne'er dropt ye a cloud-resting mountain,
Nor waterfalls tumble their music so free;
Had nature deny'd ye a bush, tree, or fountain,
Ye still had been lov'd as an Eden by me.

And long, my dear vallies, long, long may ye flourish,
Though rush-beds and thistles make most of your pride;
May showers never fail the green's daisies to nourish,
Nor suns dry the fountain that rills by its side.

Your skies may be gloomy, and misty your mornings,
Your flat swampy vallies unwholesome may be;
Still, refuse of nature, without her adornings
Ye are dear as this heart in my bosom to me.

SONG.

The sultry day it wears away,
And o'er the distant leas
The mist again, in purple stain,
Falls moist on flower and trees:
His home to find, the weary hind
Glad leaves his carts and ploughs;
While maidens fair, with bosoms bare,
Go coolly to their cows.

The red round sun his work has done,
And dropp'd into his bed;
And sweetly shin'd, the oaks behind,
His curtains fring'd with red:
And step by step the night has crept,
And day, as loth, retires;
But clouds, more dark, night's entrance mark,
Till day's last spark expires.

Pride of the vales, the nightingales
Now charm the oaken grove;
And loud and long, with amorous tongue,
They try to please their love:
And where the rose reviving blows
Upon the swelter'd bower,
I'll take my seat, my love to meet,
And wait th' appointed hour.

And like the bird, whose joy is heard
Now he his love can join,
Who hails so loud the even's shroud,
I'll wait as glad for mine:
As weary bees o'er parched leas
Now meet reviving flowers;
So on her breast I'll sink to rest,
And bless the evening hours.

COWPER GREEN.

Now eve's hours hot noon succeed;
And day's herald, wing'd with speed,
Flush'd with summer's ruddy face,
Hies to light some cooler place.
Now industry her hand has dropt,
And the din of labour's stopt:

All is silent, free from care,
The welcome boon of night to share.

Pleas'd I wander from the town,
Pester'd by the selfish clown,
Whose talk, though spun the night about,
Hogs, cows, and horses spin it out.
Far from these, so low, so vain,
Glad I wind me down the lane,
Where a deeper gloom pervades
'Tween the hedges' narrow shades;
Where a mimic night-hour spreads,
'Neath the ash-grove's meeting heads.
Onward then I glad proceed,
Where the insect and the weed
Court my eye, as I pursue
Something curious, worthy view:
Chiefly, though, my wanderings bend
Where the groves of ashes end,

And their ceasing lights the scene
Of thy lov'd prospects, Cowper Green!

Though no rills with sandy sweep
Down thy shaggy borders creep,
Save as when thy rut-gull'd lanes
Run little brooks with hasty rains;
Though no yellow plains allow
Food on thee for sheep or cow;
Where on list'ning ears so sweet
Fall the mellow low and bleat,
Greeting, on eve's dewy gale,
Resting-fold and milking-pail;
Though not these adorn thy scene,
Still I love thee, Cowper Green!
Some may praise the grass-plat whims,
Which the gard'ner weekly trims;
And cut-hedge and lawn adore,
Which his shears have smoothen'd o'er:

But give me to ponder still
Nature, when she blooms at will,
In her kindred taste and joy,
Wildness and variety;
Where the furze has leave to wreathe
Its dark prickles o'er the heath;
Where the grey-grown hawthorns spread
Foliag'd houses o'er one's head;
By the spoiling ax untouch'd,
Where the oak tree, gnarl'd and notch'd,
Lifts its deep-moss'd furrow'd side,
In nature's grandeur, nature's pride.
Such is still my favour'd scene,
When I seek thee, Cowper Green!
And full pleas'd would nature's child
Wander o'er thy narrow wild;
Marking well thy shaggy head,
Where uncheck'd the brambles spread;
Where the thistle meets the sight,
With its down-head, cotton-white;

And the nettle, keen to view,
And hemlock with its gloomy hue;
Where the henbane too finds room
For its sickly-stinking bloom;
And full many a nameless weed,
Neglected, left to run to seed,
Seen but with disgust by those
Who judge a blossom by the nose.
Wildness is my suiting scene,
So I seek thee, Cowper Green!

Still thou ought'st to have thy meed,
To show thy flower as well as weed.
Though no fays, from May-day's lap,
Cowslips on thee care to drop;
Still does nature yearly bring
Fairest heralds of the spring:
On thy wood's warm sunny side
Primrose blooms in all its pride;

Violets carpet all thy bowers;
And anemone's weeping flowers,
Dyed in winter's snow and rime,
Constant to their early time,
White the leaf-strewn ground again,
And make each wood a garden then.
Thine's full many a pleasing bloom
Of blossoms lost to all perfume:
Thine the dandelion flowers,
Gilt with dew, like suns with showers;
Hare-bells thine, and bugles blue,
And cuckoo-flowers all sweet to view;
Thy wild-woad on each road we see;
And medicinal betony,
By thy woodside-railing, reeves
With antique mullein's flannel-leaves.
These, though mean, the flowers of waste,
Planted here in nature's haste,
Display to the discerning eye
Her loved, wild variety:

Each has charms in nature's book
I cannot pass without a look.
And thou hast fragrant herbs and seed,
Which only garden's culture need:
Thy horehound tufts I love them well,
And ploughman's spikenard's spicy smell;
Thy thyme, strong-scented 'neath one's feet,
Thy marjoram-beds, so doubly sweet;
And pennyroyals creeping twine:
These, each succeeding each, are thine,
Spreading o'er thee wild and gay,
Blessing spring, or summer's day.
As herb, flower, weed adorn thy scene,
Pleas'd I seek thee, Cowper Green.

And I oft zigzag me round
Thy uneven, heathy ground;
Here a knoll and there a scoop
Jostling down and clambering up,

Which the sandman's delving spade
And the pitman's pix have made;
Though many a year has o'er thee roll'd,
Since the grass first hid the mold;
And many a hole has delv'd thee still,
Since peace cloth'd each mimic hill:
Where the pitmen often find
Antique coins of various kind;
And, 'neath many a loosen'd block,
Unlid coffins in the rock,
Casting up the skull and bone
Heedless, as one hurls a stone:
Not a thought of battles by,
Bloody times of chivalry,
When each country's kingly lord
'Gainst his neighbour drew his sword;
And on many a hidden scene,
Now a hamlet, field, or green,
Waged his little bloody fight
To keep his freedom and his right:

And doubtless such was once the scene
Of thee, time-shrouded Cowper Green!
O how I love a glimpse to see
Of hoary, bald antiquity;
And often in my musings sigh,
Whene'er such relics meet my eye,
To think that history's early page
Should yield to black oblivion's rage;
And e'en without a mention made,
Resign them to his deadly shade;
Leaving conjecture but to pause,
That such and such might be the cause.

'Tis sweet the fragments to explore,
Time's so kind to keep in store;
Wrecks the cow-boy often meets
On the mole-hills' thymy seats,
When, by careless pulling weeds,
Chance unbares the shining beads,

That to tasteful minds display
Relics of the Druid day;
Opening on conjecturing eyes
Some lone hermit's paradise.
Doubtless oft, as here it might,
Where such relics meet the sight,
On that self-same spot of ground
Where the cowboy's beads are found,
Hermits, fled from worldly care,
May have moss'd a cottage there;
Liv'd on herbs that there abound,
Food and physic doubly found;
Herbs, that have existence still
In every vale, on every hill,—
Whose virtues only in them died,
As rural life gave way to pride.
Doubtless too oblivion's blot
Blacks some sacred lonely spot,
As "Cowper Green!" in thee it may,
That once was thine in later day:

Thou mightst hide thy pilgrim then
From the plague of worldly men;
Thou mightst here possess thy cells,
Wholesome herbs, and pilgrim-wells;
And doubtlessly this very seat,
This thyme-capt hill beneath one's feet,
Might be, or nearly so, the spot
On which arose his lonely cot;
And on that existing bank,
Clothed in its sedges rank,
Grass might grow, and mosses spread,
That thatch'd his roof, and made his bed:
Yes, such might be; and such I love
To think and fancy, as I rove
O'er thy wood-encircled hill,
Like a world-shunning pilgrim still.

Now the dew-mists faster fall,
And the night her gloomy pall

Black'ning flings 'tween earth and sky,
Hiding all things from the eye;
Nor broken seam, nor thin-spun screen,
The moon can find to peep between:
Now thy unmolested grass,
Untouch'd even by the ass,
Spindled up its destin'd height,
Far too sour for sheep to bite,
Drooping hangs each feeble joint
With a glass nob on its point:—
Fancy now shall leave the scene,
And bid good-night to Cowper Green.

SONG.

One gloomy eve I roam'd about
'Neath Oxey's hazel bowers,
While timid hares were darting out,
To crop the dewy flowers;

And soothing was the scene to me,
Right pleased was my soul,
My breast was calm as summer's sea
When waves forget to roll.

But short was even's placid smile,
My startled soul to charm,
When Nelly lightly skipt the stile,
With milk-pail on her arm:
One careless look on me she flung,
As bright as parting day;
And like a hawk from covert sprung,
It pounc'd my peace away.

THE GIPSY'S CAMP.

How oft on Sundays, when I'd time to tramp,
My rambles led me to a gipsy's camp,
Where the real effigy of midnight hags,
With tawny smoked flesh and tatter'd rags,
Uncouth-brimm'd hat, and weather-beaten cloak,
'Neath the wild shelter of a knotty oak,
Along the greensward uniformly pricks
Her pliant bending hazel's arching sticks;
While round-topt bush, or briar-entangled hedge,
Where flag-leaves spring beneath, or ramping sedge,
Keep off the bothering bustle of the wind,
And give the best retreat she hopes to find.
How oft I've bent me o'er her fire and smoke,
To hear her gibberish tale so quaintly spoke,
While the old Sybil forg'd her boding clack,
Twin imps the meanwhile bawling at her back;

Oft on my hand her magic coin's been struck,
And hoping chink, she talk'd of morts of luck:
And still, as boyish hopes did first agree,
Mingled with fears to drop the fortune's fee,
I never fail'd to gain the honours sought,
And Squire and Lord were purchas'd with a groat.
But as man's unbelieving taste came round,
She furious stampt her shoeless foot aground,
Wip'd bye her soot-black hair with clenching fist,
While through her yellow teeth the spittle hist,
Swearing by all her lucky powers of fate,
Which like as footboys on her actions wait,
That fortune's scale should to my sorrow turn,
And I one day the rash neglect should mourn;
That good to bad should change, and I should be
Lost to this world and all eternity;
That poor as Job I should remain unblest;—
(Alas, for fourpence how my die is cast!)
Of not a hoarded farthing be possest,
And when all's done, be shov'd to hell at last!

RECOLLECTIONS AFTER A RAMBLE.

THE rosy day was sweet and young,
The clod-brown lark that hail'd the morn
Had just her summer anthem sung,
And trembling dropped in the corn;
The dew-rais'd flower was perk and proud,
The butterfly around it play'd;
The sky's blue clear, save woolly cloud
That pass'd the sun without a shade.

On the pismire's castle hill,
While the burnet-buttons quak'd,
While beside the stone-pav'd rill
Cowslip bunches nodding shak'd,

Bees in every peep did try,
Great had been the honey shower,
Soon their load was on their thigh,
Yellow dust as fine as flour.

Brazen magpies, fond of clack,
Full of insolence and pride,
Chattering on the donkey's back
Perch'd, and pull'd his shaggy hide;
Odd crows settled on the path,
Dames from milking trotting home
Said the sign foreboded wrath,
And shook their heads at ills to come.

While cows restless from the ground
Plung'd into the stream and drank,
And the rings went whirling round,
Till they touch'd the flaggy bank,

On the arch's wall I knelt,
Curious, as I often did,
To see the words the sculpture spelt,
But the moss its letters hid.

Labour sought the water cool,
And stretching took a hearty sup,
The fish were playing in the pool,
And turn'd their milk-white bellies up;
Clothes laid down behind a bush
Boys were wading near the path,
Deeply did the maiden blush
As she pass'd the merry bath.

Some with lines the fish to catch,
Quirking boys let loose from school,
Others side the hedge-row watch,
Where the linnet took the wool:

'Tending Hodge had slept too fast,
While his cattle stray'd abroad,
Swift the freed horse gallop'd past,
Pattering down the stony road.

The gipsies' tune was loud and strong,
As round the camp they danc'd a jig,
And much I lov'd the brown girl's song,
While list'ning on the wooden brig;
The shepherd, he was on his rounds,
The dog stopt short to lap the stream,
And jingling in the fallow grounds
The ploughman urg'd his reeking team.

Often did I stop to gaze
On each spot once dear to me,
Known 'mong those remember'd days
Of banish'd, happy infancy:

' Often did I view the shade
Where once a nest my eyes did fill,
And often mark'd the place I play'd
At "roly poly" down the hill.

In the wood's deep shade did stand,
As I pass'd, the sticking-troop;
And Goody begg'd a helping hand
To heave her rotten faggot up:
The riding-gate, sharp jerking round,
Follow'd fast my heels again,
While echo mock'd the clapping sound,
And "clap, clap," sang the woods amain.

The wood is sweet—I love it well,
In spending there my leisure hours,
To seek the snail its painted shell,
And look about for curious flowers;

Or 'neath the hazel's leafy thatch,
On a stulp or mossy ground,
Little squirrel's gambols watch,
Dancing oak trees round and round.

Green was the shade—I love the woods,
When autumn's wind is mourning loud,
To see the leaves float on the floods,
Dead within their yellow shroud:
The wood was then in glory spread—
I love the browning bough to see
That litters autumn's dying bed—
Her latest sigh is dear to me.

'Neath a spreading shady oak
For awhile to muse I lay;
From its grains a bough I broke,
To fan the teasing flies away:

Then I sought the woodland side,
Cool the breeze my face did meet,
And the shade the sun did hide;
Though 'twas hot, it seemed sweet.

And as while I clomb the hill,
Many a distant charm I found;
Pausing on the lagging mill,
That scarcely mov'd its sails around:
Hanging o'er a gate or stile,
Till my curious eye did tire,
Leisure was employ'd awhile,
Counting many a peeping spire.

While the hot sun 'gan to wane,
Cooling glooms fast deep'ning still;
Refreshing greenness spread the plain,
As black clouds crept the southern hill;

Labour sought a sheltering place,
'Neath some thick wood-woven bower,
While odd rain-drops damp'd his face,
Heralds of the coming shower.

Where the oak-plank cross'd the stream,
Which the early-rising lass
Climbs with milk-pail gathering cream,
Crook'd paths tracking through the grass:
There, where willows hang their boughs,
Briars and blackthorns form'd a bower
Stunted thick by sheep and cows,—
There I stood to shun the shower.

Sweet it was to feel the breeze
Blowing cool without the sun,
Bumming gad-flies ceas'd to teaze,
All seem'd glad the shower to shun:

Sweet it was to mark the flower,
Rain-drops glist'ning on its head,
Perking up beneath the bower,
As if rising from the dead.

And full sweet it was to look,
How clouds misted o'er the hill,
Rain-drops how they dimp'd the brook,
Falling fast and faster still;
While the gudgeons darting by,
Cring'd 'neath water-grasses' shade,
Startling as each nimble eye
Saw the rings the dropples made.

And upon the dripping ground,
As the shower had ceas'd again,
As the eye was wandering round,
Trifling troubles caus'd a pain;

Overtaken in the shower,
Bumble-bees I wander'd by,
Clinging to the drowking flower,
Left without the power to fly:

And full often, drowning wet,
Scampering beetles rac'd away,
Safer shelter glad to get,
Flooded out from whence they lay:
While the moth, for night's reprief,
Waited safe and snug withal
'Neath the plantain's bowery leaf,
Where not e'en a drop could fall.

Then the clouds dispers'd again,
And full sweet it was to view
Sunbeams, trembling long in vain,
Now they 'gan to glimmer through:

And as labour strength regains
From ale's booning bounty given,
So reviv'd the fresh'ning plains
From the smiling showers of heaven.

Sweet the birds did chant their songs,
Blackbird, linnet, lark, and thrush;
Music from a many tongues
Melted from each dripping bush:
Deafen'd echo, on the plain,
As the sunbeams broke the cloud,
Scarce could help repeat the strain,
Nature's anthem flow'd so loud.

What a fresh'ning feeling came,
As the sun's smile gleam'd again;
Summer seem'd no more the same,
Such a mildness swept the plain;

Breezes, such as one would seek,
Cooling infants of the shower,
Fanning sweet the burning cheek,
Trembled through the bramble-bower.

Insects of mysterious birth
Sudden struck my wondering sight,
Doubtless brought by moisture forth,
Hid in knots of spittle white;
Backs of leaves the burthen bear,
Where the sunbeams cannot stray,
" Wood seers" call'd, that wet declare,
So the knowing shepherds say.

As the cart-rut rippled down
With the burden of the rain,
Boys came drabbling from the town,
Glad to meet their sports again;

Stopping up the mimic rills,
Till they forc'd their frothy bound,
Then the keck made water-mills
In the current whisk'd around.

Once again did memory pain
O'er the life she once had led;
Once did manhood wish again
Childish joys had never fled:
" Could I lay these woes aside
Which I long have murmur'd o'er,
Mix a boy with boys," I sigh'd,
" Fate should then be teas'd no more."

Hot the sun in summer warms,
Quick the roads dry o'er the plain:
Girls, with baskets on their arms,
Soon renew'd their sports again;

O'er the green they sought their play,
Where the cowslip-bunches grew,
Quick the rush-bent fann'd away,
As they danc'd and bounded through.

Some went searching by the wood,
Peeping 'neath the weaving thorn,
Where the pouch-lipp'd cuckoo-bud
From its snug retreat was torn;
Where the ragged-robin stood
With its pip'd stem streak'd with jet;
And the crow-flowers, golden hued,
Careless plenty easier met.

Some, with many an anxious pain
Childish wishes to pursue,
From the pond-head gaz'd in vain
On the flag-flower's yellow hue;

Smiling in its safety there,
Sleeping o'er its shadow'd bloom,
While the flood's triumphing care
Crimpled round its guarded home.

Then I stood to pause again;
Retrospection sigh'd and smil'd,
Musing, 'tween a joy and pain,
How I acted when a child;
When by clearing brooks I've been,
Where the painted sky was given,
Thinking, if I tumbled in,
I should fall direct to heaven.

Many an hour had come and gone
Since the town last met my eye,
Where, huge baskets mauling on;
Maids hung out their clothes to dry;

Granny there was on the bench,
Coolly sitting in the swail,
Stopping oft a love-sick wench,
To pinch her snuff, and hear her tale.

Be the journey e'er so mean,
Passing by a cot or tree,
In the rout there's something seen
Which the curious love to see;
In each ramble, taste's warm souls
More of wisdom's self can view,
Than blind ignorance beholds
All life's seven stages through.

A SIGH.

Again freckled cowslips are gilding the plain,
And crow-flowers yellow again o'er the lea,
Again the speck'd throstle comes in with her strain,
And welcomes the spring—but no spring can I see.

I once hail'd the throstle, her singing begun,
And bath'd in spring's dew when her flower met my eyes;
I sought for the kingcup all cloth'd in the sun,
And gather'd my cowslips, and joy'd in the prize.

They brought nature's spring, and they comforted me,
They wip'd winter off, and did pleasure restore;
But, alas! in their tidings a change can I see,
Fate's added a postscript, "Thy spring is no more."

TO A BOWER.

THREE times, sweet hawthorn! I have met thy bower,
And thou hast gain'd my love, and I do feel
An aching pain to leave thee: every flower
Around thee opening doth new charms reveal,

And binds my fondness stronger.—Wild wood bower,
In memory's calendar thou'rt treasur'd up:
And should we meet in some remoter hour,
When all thy bloom to winter-winds shall droop;
Ah, in life's winter, many a day to come,
Should my grey wrinkles pass thy spot of ground,
And find it bare—with thee no longer crown'd;
Within the woodman's faggot torn from hence,
Or chopt by hedgers up for yonder fence;
Ah, should I chance by thee as then to come,
I'll look upon thy nakedness with pain,
And, as I view thy desolated doom,
In fancy's eye I'll fetch thy shade again:
And of this lovely day I'll think and sigh,
And ponder o'er this sweetly-passing hour,
And feel as then the throes of joys gone by,
When I was young, and thou a blooming bower.

BALLAD.

WHEN nature's beauty shone complete,
With summer's lovely weather,
And even, shadowing day's retreat,
Brought swains and maids together;
Then I did meet a charming face,
But who—I'll be discreet:
Though lords themselves without disgrace
Might love whom I did meet.

" Good evening, lovely lass," said I,
To make her silence break;
The instant evening's blushing sky
Was rival'd in her cheek;

Her eyes were turn'd upon the ground,
She made me no reply,
But downward looks my bosom found:
"You've won me," whisper'd I.

And I did try all love could do,
And she try'd all to fly,
Now lingering slow to let me go,
Then hurrying to pass by:
"My love," said I, "you've me mistook,
No harm from me you'll meet;"
She only answer'd with a look,
But it was 'witching sweet.

I own'd my love, and prais'd her eyes,
Whose power she little knew;
And doubtless then she fancied lies,
What since she's proved true;

Confusion mingling fear and shame,
Between the " Yes" and " No,"
O when I mention'd love's soft name
How sweet her cheeks did glow!

I told her all the open truth,
'Bout being a labouring swain,
With not one groat to boast, forsooth,
But what hard work did gain:
And begg'd excuse in such-like clothes
Within her way to fall;
Wenches are ta'en with flashy beaus—
But she excus'd it all.

As near the humble cot we came,
Her fears did meet alarm
Lest friends imprudent ways should blame,
And think I meant her harm:

So there I prest her to my heart,
And there a kiss was ta'en,
And there I vow'd, ere we did part,
To meet her soon again.

TO POESY.

O SWEETLY wild and 'witching Poesy!
Thou light of this world's hermitage I prove thee;
And surely none helps loving thee that knows thee,
A soul of feeling cannot help but love thee.
I would say how thy secret wonders move me,
Thou spell of loveliness!—but 'tis too much:
Had I the language of the gods above me
I might then venture thy wild harp to touch,

And sing of all thy thrilling pains and pleasures;
The flowers I meet in this world's wilderness;
The comforts rising from thy spell-bound treasures,
Thy cordial balm that softens my distress:
I would say all, but thou art far above me;
Words are too weak, expression can't be had;
I can but say I love, and dearly love thee,
And that thou cheer'st me when my soul is sad.

TO THE CLOUDS.

O PAINTED clouds! sweet beauties of the sky,
How have I view'd your motion and your rest,
When like fleet hunters ye have left mine eye,
In your thin gauze of woolly-fleecing drest;

Or in your threaten'd thunder's grave black vest,
Like black deep waters slowly moving by,
Awfully striking the spectator's breast
With your Creator's dread sublimity,
As admiration mutely views your storms.
And I do love to see you idly lie,
Painted by heav'n as various as your forms,
Pausing upon the eastern mountain high,
As morn awakes with spring's wood-harmony;
And sweeter still, when in your slumbers sooth
You hang the western arch o'er day's proud eye:
Still as the even-pool, uncurv'd and smooth,
My gazing soul has look'd most placidly;
And higher still devoutly wish'd to strain,
To wipe your shrouds and sky's blue blinders by,
With all the warmness of a moon-struck brain,—
To catch a glimpse of Him who bids you reign,
And view the dwelling of all majesty.

SONG.

DROPT here and there upon the flower
I love the dew to see,
For then returns the even's hour
That is so dear to me,
When silence reigns upon the plain,
And night hides all, or nearly;
For then I meet the smiles again
Of her I love so dearly.

O how I love yon dusky plains,
Though others there may be
As much belov'd by other swains,
But none so dear to me:

Their thorn-buds smell as sweet the while,
Their brooks may run as clearly;
But what are they without the smile
Of her I love so dearly.

In yonder bower the maid I've met,
Whom still I love to meet;
The dew-drops fall, the sun has set,
O evening thou art sweet!
Hope's eye fain breaks the misty glooms,
The time's expir'd, or nearly—
Ah, faithful still, and here she comes;
Who could but love thee dearly!

Though still we meet 'neath fate's control,
Who knows the luck that shall come,
And then, thou idol of my soul,
We'll meet, with happier welcome;

I wish I had, for sake of thee,
A lord's estate, or nearly;
They soon should see who'd ladies be,
And whom I love so dearly.

TO A DEAD TREE.

Old tree thou art wither'd—I pass'd thee last year,
And the blackbird snug hid in thy branches did sing,
Thy shadow stretch'd dark o'er the grass sprouting near,
And thou wert as green as thy mates of the spring.

How alter'd since then! not a leaf hast thou got,
Thy honours brown round thee that clothed the tree;
The clown passeth by thee and heedeth thee not,
But thou'rt a warm source of reflection for me.

I think, while I view thee and rest on the stile,
Life's bloom is as frail as the leaves thou hast shed;
Like thee I may boast of my honours awhile,
But new springs may blossom, and mine may be fled:
Fond friends may bend o'er the rais'd turf where I'm laid,
And warm recollection the past may look o'er,
And say by my life, as I say by thy shade,
"Last spring he was living, but now he's no more."

THE DISAPPOINTMENT.

"Ah, where can he linger?" said Doll, with a sigh,
As bearing her milk-burthen home:
"Since he's broken his vow, near an hour has gone by,
So fair as he promis'd to come."
—She'd fain had him notice the loudly-clapt gate,
And fain call'd him up to her song;
But while her stretch'd shade prov'd the omen too late,
Heavy-hearted she mutter'd along.

She look'd and she listen'd, and sigh follow'd sigh,
And jealous thoughts troubled her head;
The skirts of the pasture were losing the eye,
As eve her last finishing spread;

And hope, so endearing, was topmost to see,
As 'tween-light was cheating the view,
Every thing at a distance—a bush, or a tree,
Her love's pleasing picture it drew.

The pasture-gate creak'd, pit-a-pat her heart went,
Fond thrilling with hope's pleasing pain,
She certainly thought that a signal it meant,
So she turn'd, to be cheated again;
Expectations and wishes throbb'd warm to her side,
But soon the sweet feeling was lost,
Chill damps quick ensuing, when nigh she descried
Her idle cows rubbing the post.

By fancy soon tickled, by hopes led astray,
Again did she hope, but in vain;—
A twitch at her sleeve!—'twas the shepherd's fond way,
And she look'd o'er her shoulder again;

But a bramble had caught at her gown passing by;
Disappointment, how great is thy smart!
How deep was the sorrow explain'd in that sigh,
Like a bramble-thorn twang'd through her heart!

Quite wearied she soodled along through the dew,
And oft look'd and listen'd around,
And loudly she clapt every gate she came through,
To call her lost love to the sound;
And whenever to rest she her buckets set down,
She jingled her yokes to and fro,
And her yokes she might jingle till morn—a rude clown,
Ere he it seem'd offered to go.

Passing maids wonder'd much as she came to the town,
To see her so still on her way;—
She ne'er stopt to name a young man or new gown,
So much as she used to say:

Some ask'd if her tongue she had lost on the plain,
Some enquir'd if she ow'd any spite;
But short were the answers she made them again,
" Yes," or " no," and a mutter'd " good night."

She'd cause to be silent; and knew it too well,
And said to herself passing by,
" Disappointments like mine if to you they befel,
Ye would then be as sulky as I."
Now nigh home and Roger, her bosom glow'd hot,
And jealousies rose on her cheek;
She'd be bound his delay a new sweetheart had got,
And if he came now she'd not speak.

She sat herself down soon as got in the house,
No dossity in her to stir;
The cat at her presence left watching the mouse,
And the milk she might lap it for her,

Eat it all an she would, for she car'd not a pin,
She'd other fish frying as then;
And soon as chance offer'd that she could begin,
She 'gan weigh her doubts to her sen.

" Ah, the gipsy, she told me my fortune last night,
Too true have I prov'd what she said:
' You love him too warmly that loves you too light,'
And grievous she shaked her head;
' He scorns you—the lines of your hands,' she said,
' meet,'
I was fit to drop under my cow;
' It's as plain as the nose on your face for to see't,'
I could not believe it till now.

" How could I, when now but a day or two's gone,
Since he fuss'd me so up in the grove,
And preach'd like a parson as leading me on,
And seem'd like a saint fall'n in love?

He smilingly bid me behold the stiff bean,
How it held up the weak winding pea,—
'And so on my arm,' said he, 'Dolly may lean,
For I'll be a prop unto thee.'

"And oft did he shew me, as proofs of his love,
The gate, and the stile, where we came,
And many a favourite tree in the grove,
Where he had been marking my name:
And these made him staunch in my foolish esteem;
But deuce take such provings, forsooth,
They're like flimsy nick-nacks, that cheat in a dream,
When the morning sun wakes with the truth.

"Last week I the first time 'gan doubt his respect,
When at market he left me behind;
He made no excuses to hide his neglect,
Plain proof that he'd changed his mind:

When I said how I loiter'd in hopes he would come,
And when all my troubles he learn'd,
How late and how wet I was ere I got home,
He ne'er seem'd a morsel concern'd.

" And magpies that chatter'd, no omen so black,
The dreams of my being a bride,
Odd crows that are constantly fix'd in my track,
Plain prov'd that bad luck would betide:
The coffin-spark burning my holiday gown,
As nothing's so certain a sign;
The knives I keep crossing whenever laid down,
Were proofs of these sorrows of mine.

" A good-for-nought looby, he nettled me sore,
I minded him oft when at church,
How under the wenches' fine bonnets he'd glower,
As smiling they came in the porch:

Lord knows, scores of times he has made me to sin,
For, being so bother'd and vex'd,
'Bout the parson's good preaching I car'd not a pin,
And never once thought of the text.

" Like a fool, with full many a lying excuse,
To see him I've stole in the street,
And drest to entice him; but all's of no use,
'Tis folly such things to repeat:
No, no, his behaviour, a good-for-nought chap,
I'll see no uneasiness in it;
The wreath he last bought me, to dress my new cap,
I'll burn it to ashes this minute."

Thus she vented her griefs, and gave ease to her sighs,
Till the tinkled latch startled her dumb,
And ended her tale in a pause of surprise,
While hope whisper'd comfort, " he's come!"

He enter'd, and begg'd she'd excuse the late hour,
She doubts his assertions awhile,
Then as the glad sun breaks the clouds in a shower,
Tears melt in a welcoming smile.

Ah, sad disappointment! your damp chilly pain
And all jealous doubts you impart,
Description but mixes her colours in vain
To picture your horrors at heart.
Gall'd jealousy, like as the tide, ebbs to rest,
Subsiding as gradually o'er;
Contented she smother'd her sighs on his breast,
And the kiss seem'd as sweet as before.

TO AN INFANT DAUGHTER.

Sweet gem of infant fairy-flowers!
Thy smiles on life's unclosing hours,
Like sunbeams lost in summer showers,
They wake my fears;
When reason knows its sweets and sours,
They'll change to tears.

God help thee, little senseless thing!
Thou, daisy-like of early spring,
Of ambush'd winter's hornet sting
Hast yet to tell;
Thou know'st not what to-morrows bring:
I wish thee well.

But thou art come, and soon or late
'Tis thine to meet the frowns of fate,
The harpy grin of envy's hate,
And mermaid-smiles
Of worldly folly's luring bait,
That youth beguiles.

And much I wish, whate'er may be
The lot, my child, that falls to thee,
Nature may never let thee see
Her glass betimes,
But keep thee from my failings free,—
Nor itch at rhymes.

Lord knows my heart, it loves thee much;
And may my feelings, aches, and such,
The pains I meet in folly's clutch
Be never thine:
Child, it's a tender string to touch,
That sounds "thou'rt mine."

LANGLEY BUSH.

O LANGLEY BUSH! the shepherd's sacred shade,
Thy hollow trunk oft gain'd a look from me;
Full many a journey o'er the heath I've made,
For such-like curious things I love to see.
What truth the story of the swain allows,
That tells of honours which thy young days knew,
Of "Langley Court" being kept beneath thy boughs
I cannot tell—thus much I know is true,
That thou art reverenc'd: even the rude clan
Of lawless gipsies, driven from stage to stage,
Pilfering the hedges of the husbandman,
Spare thee, as sacred, in thy withering age.

Both swains and gipsies seem to love thy name,
Thy spot's a favourite with the sooty crew,
And soon thou must depend on gipsy-fame,
Thy mouldering trunk is nearly rotten through.
My last doubts murmur on the zephyr's swell,
My last look lingers on thy boughs with pain;
To thy declining age I bid farewel,
Like old companions, ne'er to meet again.

SORROWS FOR A FAVOURITE TABBY CAT,

WHO LEFT THIS SCENE OF TROUBLES, FRIDAY NIGHT, NOV. 26, 1819.

LET brutish hearts, as hard as stones,
Mock the weak Muse's tender moans,
As now she wails o'er Titty's bones
With anguish deep;
Doubtless o'er parent's dying groans
They'd little weep.

Ah, Pity! thine's a tender heart,
Thy sigh soon heaves, thy tears soon start;
And thou hast given the muse her part
Salt tears to shed,
To mourn and sigh with sorrow's smart;
For pussy's dead.

Ah, mourning Memory! 'neath thy pall
Thou utterest many a piercing call,
Pickling in vinegar's sour gall
Ways that are fled—
The ways, the feats, the tricks, and all,
Of pussy dead.

Thou tell'st of all the gamesome plays
That mark'd her happy kitten-days:
—Ah, I did love her funny ways
On the sand floor;
But now sad sorrow damps my lays:
Pussy's no more.

Thou paint'st her flirting round and round,
As she was wont, with things she'd found,
Chasing the spider o'er the ground,
Straws pushing on;
Thou paint'st them on a bosom-wound:
Poor pussy's gone.

Ah mice, rejoice! ye've lost your foe,
Who watch'd your scheming robberies so,
That while she liv'd twa'n't yours to know
A crumb of bread;
'Tis yours to triumph, mine's the woe,
Now pussy's dead.

While pussy liv'd ye'd empty maws;
No sooner peep'd ye out your nose,
But ye were instant in her claws
With squeakings dread:
Ye're now set free from tyrant-laws;
Poor pussy's dead.

Left freely here to prowl at night,
To wake me, like some squeaking sprite,
There's nothing now but ye dare bite,
Your terror's fled;
Put up I must with all your spite,
Poor pussy's dead.

But if "wide nicks" ye mean to run,
To scoop my barley crust in fun,
And drop your tails on't when ye've done,
Beware your head;
Or ye'll find what ye'd wish to shun,
Though pussy's dead.

As sure's you're born within your clothes,
If puss can't nab ye by the nose,
I'll find a scheme ye'd ill-suppose
To save my bread;
Ye may'nt too much infringe the laws,
If pussy's dead.

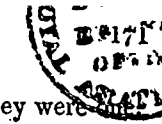
So don't ye drive your jokes too far,
Ye cupboard-plunderers as ye are;
For while I've sixpence left to spare,
And traps are had,
I'll make among ye dreadful war,
Though pussy's dead.

And now, poor puss! thou'st lost thy breath,
And decent laid the molds beneath,
As ere a cat could wish in death
For her last bed:
This to thy memory I bequeath,
Poor pussy dead!

THE WIDOWER'S LAMENT.

AGE yellows my leaf with a daily decline,
And nature turns sick with decay;
Short is the thread on life's spool that is mine,
And few are my wishes to stay:
The bud, that has seen but the sun of an hour,
When storms overtake it may sigh;
But fruit, that has weather'd life's sunshine and shower,
Drops easy and gladly to die.

The prop of my age, and the balm of my pain,
With the length of life's years has declin'd;
And, like the last sheep of the flock on the plain,
She leaves me uneasy behind:



I think of the days when our hearts they were one!
And she of my youth was the pride;
I look for the prop of my age, but it's gone,
And I long to drop down by her side.

SUNDAY.

THE Sabbath-day, of every day the best,
The poor man's happiness, a poor man sings;
When labour has no claim to break his rest,
And the light hours fly swift on easy wings.
What happiness this holy morning brings,
How soft its pleasures on his senses steal;
How sweet the village-bells' first warning rings;
And O how comfortable does he feel,
When with his family at ease he takes his early meal.

The careful wife displays her frugal hoard,
And both partake in comfort though they're poor;
While love's sweet offsprings, crowd the lowly board,
Their little likenesses in miniature.
Though through the week he labour does endure,
And weary limbs oft cause him to complain,
This welcome morning always brings a cure;
It teems with joys his soul to entertain,
And doubly sweet appears the pleasure after pain.

Ah, who can tell the bliss, from labour freed,
His leisure meeteth on a Sunday morn,
Fix'd in a chair, some godly book to read,
Or wandering round to view the crops of corn,
In best clothes fitted out, and beard new shorn;
Dropping adown in some warm shelter'd dell,
With six days' labour weak and weary worn;
List'ning around each distant chiming bell,
That on the soft'ning breeze melodiously doth swell.

And oft he takes his family abroad
In short excursions o'er the field and plain,
Marking each little object on his road,
An insect, sprig of grass, and ear of grain;
Endeavouring thus most simply to maintain
That the same Power that bids the mite to crawl,
That browns the wheat-lands in their summer-stain,
That Power which form'd the simple flower withal,
Form'd all that lives and grows upon this earthly ball.

The bell, when knoll'd its summons once and twice,
Now chimes in concert, calling all to prayers;
The rustic boy that hankers after vice,
And of religion little knows or cares,
Scrapes up his marbles, and by force repairs,
Though dallying on till the last bell has rung:—
The good man there his book devoutly bears,
And often, as he walks the graves among,
Looks on the untravel'd dust from whence his being sprung.

The service ended, boys their play resume
In some snug corner from the parson's view,
And where the searching clerk forgets to come;
There they their games and rural sports pursue,
With chuck and marbles wearing Sunday through:
The poor man seeks his cottage-hearth again,
And brings his family the text to view
From which the parson's good discourse was ta'en,
Which with what skill he may he labours to explain.

Hail, sacred sabbath! hail, thou poor man's joy!
Thou oft hast been a comfort to my care,
When faint and weary with the week's employ
I met thy presence in my corner-chair,
Musing and bearing up with troubles there;
Thrice hail, thou heavenly boon! by God's decree
At first creation plann'd, that all might share,
Both man and beast, some hours from labour free,
To offer thanks to Him whose mercy sent us thee.

This day the field a sweeter clothing wears,
A Sunday scene looks brighter to the eye;
And hast'ning on to Monday morning's cares
With double speed the wing'd hour gallops by.
How swift the sun streaks down the western sky,
Scarcely perceiv'd till it begins to wane,
When ploughboys mark his setting with a sigh,
Dreading the morn's approaching hours with pain,
When capon's restless calls awake to toil again.

As the day closes on its peace and rest,
The godly man sits down and takes "the book,"
To close it in a manner deem'd the best;
And for a suiting chapter doth he look,
That may for comfort and a guide be took:
He reads of patient Job, his trials' thrall,
How men are troubled when by God forsook,
And prays with David to bear up with all;—
When sleep shuts up the scene, soft as the night-dews fall.

A LOOK AT THE HEAVENS.

O WHO can witness with a careless eye
The countless lamps that light an evening sky,
And not be struck with wonder at the sight!
To think what mighty Power must there abound,
That burns each spangle with a steady light,
And guides each hanging world its rolling round.
What multitudes my misty eyes have found;
The countless numbers speak a Deity:
In numbers numberless the skies are crown'd,
And still they're nothing which my sight can see,
When science, searching through her aiding glass,
In seeming blanks to me can millions trace;
While millions more, that every heart impress,
Still brighten up throughout eternal space.
O Power Almighty! whence these beings shine,
All wisdom's lost in comprehending thine.

TO A CITY GIRL.

SWEET Mary, though nor sighs nor pains
Impassion'd courtship prove,
My simple song the truth ne'er feigns
To win thee to my love:
I ask thee from thy bustling life,
Where nought can pleasing prove,
From city noise, and care, and strife
O come, and be my love!

If harmless mirth delight thine eyes,
Then make my cot thy home;
The country-life abounds with joys,
And whispers thee to come;

Here fiddles urge thy nimble feet
Adown the dance to move,
Here pleasures in continuance meet—
O come, and be my love!

If music's charm, that all delights,
Has witcheries for thee,
The country then my love invites,
In echoed melody;
Here thrushes chant their madrigals,
Here breathes the ringed dove
Soft as day's closing murmur falls—
O come, and be my love!

If nature's prospects, wood, and vale,
Thy visits can entice,
The country's scenes thy coming hail,
To meet a paradise;

Here pride can raise no barring wall
To hide the flower and grove,
Here fields are gardens, free for all—
O come, and be my love!

If music, mirth, and all combine
To make my cot thy home,
To tempt thee, Mary, to be mine,
Then why delay to come?
Here night-birds sing my love to sleep,
Here sweet thy dreams shall prove,
Here in my arms shall Mary creep—
O come, and be my love!

TO HEALTH.

HAIL, soothing balm! Ye breezes blow,
Ransack the flower and blossom'd tree;
All, all your stolen gifts bestow,
For Health has granted all to me.

And may this blessing long be mine,
May I this favour still enjoy;
Then never shall my heart repine,
Nor yet its long continuance cloy.

And though I cannot boast, O Health!
Of aught beside, but only thee;
I would not change this bliss for wealth,
No, not for all the eye can see.

Wealth without thee is useless made,
Void of the smallest happy spark;
Yes, just as useless to give aid,
As mirrors set to light the dark.

Thy voice I hear, thy form I see,
In silence, echo, stream, or cloud;
Now, that strong voice belongs to thee
Which woods and hills repeat so loud.

The leaf, the flower, the spiry blade,
The hanging drops of pearly dew,
The russet heath, the woodland shade,
All, all can bring thee in my view.

With thee I seek the woodland shade
Beset in briery wilds among;
With thee I tread the tufted glade,
Transported by the woodlark's song.

With thee I wander where the sheep
In groups display a checquer'd train,
Where weedy waters winding creep;
Nor wilt thou fallow-clods disdain.

Then hail, sweet charm! Ye breezes blow,
Ransack the flower and blossom'd tree;
All, all your stolen gifts bestow,
For Health has granted all to me.

ABSENCE.

"WHAT ails my love, where can he be?
He never broke a vow,
Though twice the clock's reminded me
That he's deceiv'd me now.

Through some bad girl, I well know that,
Poor Peggy's love's forgot:"
Thus sigh'd a lass, as down she sat
On the appointed spot.

The night was gathering dark and deep,
But absent was the swain;
The dews on many a flower did weep,
But Peggy wept in vain:
And every noise that meets her ear,
And fancy of her eye,
Hope instant wipes away the tear,
And paints the shepherd nigh.

" Ah, now he comes, my cheek glows hot,
His dog barks to the sheep!"
Alas, her own dog lay forgot,
Loud whimpering in his sleep.

" He rustles down the wood-path park,
The boughs hung o'er it stirr'd!"—
Alas, her Rover's dreaming bark
Awoke a startled bird.

Again she look'd, and once again
Hop'd she her love should see,
A glimpse of moonlight checq'd the plain—
" Ah, here he comes, 'tis he!"
The trees hung o'er the shady way,
'Twas but a shadow'd oak.
The stock-dove wak'd the mimic lay
" Ah, there my Henry spoke!"

" Ah, this is he! I know his tread!"
Again her hope's a dream;
Her wandering cows had left their shed,
And jump'd across the stream.

" Ah, then he spoke, 'twas Henry plain!"
She felt she knew not how;
Alas, the clock but told again
That he had broke his vow.

When wearied out, her home she seeks,
Where nought could please her view;
The tear stole silent down her cheeks,
Two rose-leaves in the dew:
Her auburn hair with sweetest grace
That down her temples spread,
The night-breeze wip'd it from her face,
And kiss'd her in his stead.

MAY-DAY.

Now happy swains review the plains,
And hail the first of May;
Now linnets sing to welcome spring,
And every soul is gay.

Hob, joyful soul, high rears the pole,
With wild-flower wreaths entwin'd;
Then tiptoe round the maidens bound,
All sorrow lags behind.

Branches of thorn their doors adorn,
With every flowret lin'd
That earliest spring essays to bring,
Or searching maids can find.

All swains resort to join the sport,
E'en age will not disdain,
But oft will throng to hear the song,
And view the jocund train.

I often too had us'd to go,
The rural mirth to share,
But what, alas! time brought to pass,
Soon made me absent there.

My Colin died, the village pride,
O hapless misery!
Then sports adieu, with him they flew,
For he was all to me.

And May no more shall e'er restore
To me those joys again,
There's no relief but urging grief,
For memory wakens pain.

To think how he, so dear to me,
Had us'd to join the play;
And O so dear such pleasures were,
He gloried in the day.

But now, sad scene, he's left the green,
And Lubin here to mourn:
Then flowers may spring, and birds may sing,
And May-day may return;

But never more can they restore
Their rural sports to me—
No, no, adieu! with him they flew,
For he was all to me.

WILLIAM AND ROBIN.

WILLIAM.

When I meet Peggy in my morning walk,
She first salutes the morn, then stays to talk:
The biggest secret she will not refuse,
But freely tells me all the village-news;
And pleas'd am I, can I but haply force
Some new-made tale to lengthen the discourse,
For—O so pleasing is her company,
That hours, like minutes, in her presence fly!
I'm happy then, nor can her absence e'er
Raise in my heart the least distrust or fear.

ROBIN.

When Mary meets me I find nought to say,
She hangs her head, I turn another way;

Sometimes (but never till the maid's gone by)
" Good morning!" faulters, weaken'd by a sigh;
Confounded I remain, but yet delight
To look back on her till she's out of sight.
Then, then's the time that absence does torment:
I jeer my weakness, painfully repent,
To think how well I might have then confest
That secret love which makes me so distrest:
But, when the maiden's vanish'd for a while,
Recruited hopes my future hours beguile:
I fancy then another time I'll tell,
Which, if not better, will be quite as well;
Thus days, and weeks, and months I've dallied o'er,
And am no nearer than I was before.

WILLIAM.

Such ways as these I ever strove to shun,
Nor was I bashful when I first begun:
Freely I offer'd posies to the maid,
Which she as freely with her smiles repaid;

Yet had I been, like you, afraid to own
My love—her kindness had been still unknown.
And, now the maiden's kindness to requite,
I strive to please her morning, noon, and night:
The garland and the wreath for her I bind,
Compos'd of all the fairest I can find;
For her I stop the straggler going astray,
And watch her sheep when she's not in the way;
I fetch them up at night, and shift the pen,
And in the morning let them out again:
For her in harvest when the nuts are brown,
I take my crook to pull the branches down;
And up the trees that dismally hang o'er
The deep black pond, where none durst go before,
I heedless climb, as free from fear as now,
And snatch the clusters from the topmost bough;
Well pleas'd to risk such dangers that can prove
How much her William does his Peggy love.

ROBIN.

I search the meadows, and as well as you
I bind up posies, and sweet garlands too;
And if I unawares can hear exprest
What flower she fancies finer than the rest,
Grow where it will, I search the fields about,
And search for't daily till I find it out;
And when I've found it—oh—what tongue can tell
The fears and doubts which in my bosom swell:
The schemes contriving, and the plans I lay,
How I to her the garland may convey,
Are various indeed;—sometimes I start,
Resolv'd to tell the secret of my heart,
Vowing to make the gather'd garland prove
How much I languish, and how much I love:
But soon resolves and vows allay their heat,
And timid weakness re-assumes her seat.
The garland then, which I so painful sought,
Instantly seems as if 'twere good for nought:

" Ah, gaudy thing!" I sigh, " will Mary wear
Such foolish lumber in her auburn hair?"
Thus doubts and fears each other thought confound,
And, thus perplex'd, I throw it on the ground—
Walk from't, distrest—in pensive silence mourn,
Then plan a scheme, and back again return:
Once more the garland in my hand I take,
And of the best a smaller posy make,
Resting assur'd that such a nosegay will
To gain her favour prove a better still,
And then my hopeful heart's from grief reviv'd
By this new plan, so seeming well-contriv'd;
So off I go, and gain the spot—ah, then
I sneak along—my heart misgives again,
And as I nearer draw, " Well now," thinks I,
" I'll not speak to her, but pass silent by:"
Then from my coat that precious gift I take,
Which I beforehand treasur'd for her sake;
And after all my various scheming so,
The flowers, as worthless, to the ground I throw.

And then, if getting through the hedge-bound plain,
Having no sense to find the same again,
Her little lambkins raise a piteous cry,
Calling for help—whether far off or nigh
It matters not, can I but hear their moan,
(Of her's more tender am I than my own,)
The journey's nought at all, no steps I grudge,
But with great pleasure to their aid I trudge;
Yet this is never to the maiden known,
Nor ever done save only when alone,
Fearing from it that other swains should prove,
Or she herself, the favour to be love.
Though in her absence I so fond appear,
Yet when she's there I'm careless, as it were;
Nor can I have the face, although my mind
At the same time's most willingly inclin'd,
To do the least kind act at all for her,
Nor join the tale where she does interfere.
If from her looks a smile I e'er obtain,
I feel o'erjoy'd but never smile again;

And when I hear the swains her beauty praise,
And try with artful, fond, alluring ways
To snatch the posy from her swelling breast,
And loose the ribbon round her slender waist,
Then more familiar touch her curling hair,
And praise her beauty as beyond compare;
At this sad pains around my heart will sting,
But I ne'er look, nor tell a single thing.

BALLAD.

I LOVE thee, sweet Mary, but love thee in fear;
Were I but the morning breeze, healthy and airy,
As thou goest a walking I'd breathe in thine ear,
And whisper and sigh how I love thee, my Mary!

I wish but to touch thee, but wish it in vain;
Wert thou but a streamlet a winding so clearly,
And I little globules of soft dropping rain,
How fond would I press thy white bosom, my Mary!

I would steal a kiss, but I dare not presume;
Wert thou but a rose in thy garden, sweet fairy,
And I a bold bee for to rifle its bloom,
A whole summer's day would I kiss thee, my Mary!

I long to be with thee, but cannot tell how;
Wert thou but the elder that grows by thy dairy,
And I the blest woodbine to twine on the bough,
I'd embrace thee and cling to thee ever, my Mary!

WINTER RAINBOW.

THOU Winter, thou art keen, intensely keen;
Thy cutting frowns experience bids me know,
For in thy weather days and days I've been,
As grinning north-winds horribly did blow,
And pepper'd round my head their hail and snow:
Throughout thy reign 'tis mine each year to prove thee;
And, spite of every storm I've beetled in,
With all thy insults, Winter, I do love thee,
Thou half enchantress, like to pictur'd Sin!
Though many frowns thy sparing smiles deform,
Yet when thy sunbeam shrinketh from its shroud,
And thy bright rainbow gilds the purple storm,
I look entranced on thy painted cloud:

And what wild eye with nature's beauties charm'd,
That hangs enraptur'd o'er each 'witching spell,
Can see thee, Winter, then, and not be warm'd
To breathe thy praise, and say, "I love thee well!"

THE REQUEST.

Now the sun his blinking beam
Behind yon mountain loses,
And each eye, that might evil deem,
In blinded slumber closes:
Now the field's a desert grown,
Now the hedger's fled the grove;
Put thou on thy russet gown,
Shielded from the dews, my love,
And wander out with me.

We have met at early day,
Slander rises early,
Slander's tongues had much to say,
And still I love thee dearly:
Slander now to rest has gone,
Only wakes the courting dove;
Slily steal thy bonnet on,
Leave thy father's cot, my love,
And wander out with me.

Clowns have pass'd our noon-day screen,
'Neath the hawthorn's blossom,
Seldom there the chance has been
To press thee to my bosom:
Ploughmen now no more appear,
Night-winds but the thorn-bough move;
Squander not a minute here,
Lift the door-latch gently, love,
And wander out with me.

Oh the hour so sweet as this,
With friendly night surrounded,
Left free to talk, embrace, and kiss,
By virtue only bounded—
Lose it not, make no delay,
Put on thy doublet, hat, and glove,
Sly ope the door and steal away;
And sweet 'twill be, my only love,
To wander out with thee.

SOLITUDE.

Now as even's warning bell
Rings the day's departing knell,
Leaving me from labour free,
Solitude, I'll walk with thee:

Whether 'side the woods we rove,
Or sweep beneath the willow grove;
Whether sauntering we proceed
Cross the green, or down the mead;
Whether, sitting down, we look
On the bubbles of the brook;
Whether, curious, waste an hour,
Pausing o'er each tasty flower;
Or, expounding nature's spells,
From the sand pick out the shells;
Or, while lingering by the streams,
Where more sweet the music seems,
Listen to the soft'ning swells
Of some distant chiming bells
Mellowing sweetly on the breeze,
Rising, falling by degrees,
Dying now, then wak'd again
In full many a 'witching strain,
Sounding, as the gale flits by,
Flats and sharps of melody.

Sweet it is to wind the rill,
Sweet with thee to climb the hill,
On whose lap the bullock free
Chews his cud most placidly;
Or o'er fallows bare and brown
Beaten sheep-tracks wander down,
Where the mole unwearied still
Roots up many a crumbling hill,
And the little chumbling mouse
Gnarls the dead weed for her house,
While the plough's unfeeling share
Lays full many a dwelling bare;—
Where the lark with russet breast
'Hind the big clod hides her nest,
And the black snail's founder'd pace
Finds from noon a hiding-place,
Breaking off the scorching sun
Where the matted twitches run.

Solitude! I love thee well,
Brushing through the wilder'd dell,
Picking from the ramping grass
Nameless blossoms as I pass,
Which the dews of eve bedeck,
Fair as pearls on woman's neck;
Marking shepherds rous'd from sleep
Blundering off to fold their sheep;
And the swain, with toils distrest,
Hide his tools to seek his rest:
While the cows, with hobbling strides,
Twitching slow their fly-bit hides,
Rub the pasture's creaking gate,
Milking maids and boys to wait.
Or as sunshine leaves the sky,
As the daylight shuts her eye,
Sweet it is to meet the breeze
'Neath the shade of hawthorn trees,
By the pasture's wilder'd round,
Where the pismire hills abound,

Where the blushing fin-weed's flower
Clóses up at even's hour:
Leaving then the green behind,
Narrow hoof-plod lanes to wind,
Oak and ash embower'd beneath,
Leading to the lonely heath,
Where the unmolested furze
And the burdock's clinging burs,
And the briars, by freedom sown,
Claim the wilder'd spots their own.

There while we the scene survey
Deck'd in nature's wild array,
Swell'd with ling-clad hillocks green
Suiting the disorder'd scene,
Haply we may rest us then
In the banish'd herdsman's den;
Where the wattled hulk is fixt,
Propt some double oak betwixt,

Where the swain the branches lops,
And o'er head with rushes tops;
Where, with woodbine's sweet perfume,
And the rose's blushing bloom,
Loveliest cieling of the bower,
Arching in, peeps many a flower;
While a hill of thyme so sweet,
Or a moss'd stone, forms a seat.
There, as 'tween-light hangs the eve,
I will watch thy bosom heave;
Marking then the darksome flows
Night's gloom o'er thy mantle throws;
Fondly gazing on thine eye
As it rolls its extasy,
When thy solemn musings caught
Tell thy soul's absorb'd in thought;
When thy finely folded arm
O'er thy bosom beating warm
Wraps thee melancholy round;
And thy ringlets wild unbound

On thy lily shoulders lie,
Like dark streaks in morning's sky.
Peace and silence sit with thee,
And peace alone is heaven to me:
While the moonlight's infant hour
Faint 'gins creep to gild the bower,
And the wattled hedge gleams round
Its diamond shadows on the ground.
—O thou soothing Solitude,
From the vain and from the rude,
When this silent hour is come,
And I meet thy welcome home,
What balm is thine to troubles deep,
As on thy breast I sink to sleep;
What bliss on even's silence flows,
When thy wish'd opiate brings repose.

And I have found thee wondrous sweet,
Sheltering from the noon-day heat,

As 'neath hazels I have stood
In the gloomy hanging wood,
Where the sunbeams, filtering small,
Freckling through the branches fall;
And the flapping leaf the ground
Shadows, flitting round and round:
Where the glimmering streamlets wreathe
Many a crooked root beneath,
Unseen gliding day by day
O'er their solitary way,
Smooth or rough, as onward led
Where the wild-weed dips its head,
Murmuring,—dribbling drop by drop
When dead leaves their progress stop,—
Or winding sweet their restless way
While the frothy bubbles play.
And I love thy presence drear
In such wildernesses, where
Ne'er an axe was heard to sound,
Or a tree's fall gulsh'd the ground,

Where (as if that spot could be)
First foot-mark'd the ground by me,
All is still, and wild, and gay,
Left as at creation's day.
Pleasant too it is to look
For thy steps in shady nook,
Where, by hedge-side coolly led,
Brooks curl o'er their sandy bed;
On whose tide the clouds reflect,
In whose margin flags are freckt;
Where the waters, winding blue,
Single-arch'd brig flutter through,
While the willow-branches grey
Damp the sultry eye of day,
And in whispers mildly sooth
Chafe the mossy keystone smooth;
Where the banks, beneath them spread,
Level in an easy bed;
While the wild-thyme's pinky bells
Circulate reviving smells;

And the breeze, with feather-feet,
Crimping o'er the waters sweet,
Trembling fans the sun-tann'd cheek,
And gives the comfort one would seek.
Stretching there in soft repose,
Far from peace and freedom's foes,
In a spot, so wild, so rude,
Dear to me is solitude!
Soothing then to watch the ground,—
Every insect flitting round,
Such as painted summer brings;—
Lady-fly with freckled wings,
Watch her up the tall bent climb;
And from knotted flowers of thyme,
Where the woodland banks are deckt,
See the bee his load collect;
Mark him turn the petals by,
Gold dust gathering on his thigh,
As full many a hum he heaves,
While he pats th' intruding leaves,

Lost in many a heedless spring,
Then wearing home on heavy wing.

But when sorrows more oppress,
When the world brings more distress,
Wishing to despise as then
Brunts of fate, and scorn of men;
When fate's demons thus intrude,
Then I seek thee, Solitude,
Where the abbey's height appears
Hoary 'neath a weight of years;
Where the mouldering walls are seen
Hung with pellitory green;
Where the steeple's taper stretch
Tires the eye its length to reach,
Dizzy, nauntling high and proud,
Top-stone losing in a cloud;
Where the cross, to time resign'd,
Creaking harshly in the wind,

Crowning high the rifted dome,
Points the pilgrim's wish'd-for home;
While the look fear turns away,
Shuddering at its dread decay.
There let me my peace pursue
'Neath the shades of gloomy yew,
Doleful hung with mourning green,
Suiting well the solemn scene;
There, that I may learn to scan
Mites illustrious, called man,
Turn with thee the nettles by
Where the grave-stone meets the eye,
Soon, full soon to read and see
That all below is vanity;
And man, to me a galling thing,
Own'd creation's lord and king,
A minute's length, a zephyr's breath,
Sport of fate, and prey of death;
Tyrant to-day, to-morrow gone;
Distinguish'd only by a stone,

That fain would have the eye to know
Pride's better dust is lodg'd below,—
While worms like me are mouldering laid,
With nothing set to say "they're dead;"—
All the difference, trifling thing,
That notes at last the slave and king.
As wither'd leaves, life's bloom when stopt,
That drop in autumn, so they dropt:
As snails, which in their painted shell
So snugly once were known to dwell,
When in the school-boy's care we view
The pleasing toys of varied hue.—
By age or accident are flown,
The shell left empty,—tenant gone;—
So pass we from the world's affairs,
And careless vanish from its cares;
So leave, with silent, long farewel,
Vain life——as left the snail his shell.

All this when there my eyes behold
On every stone and heap of mould,
Solitude, though thou art sweet,
Solemn art thou then to meet;
When with list'ning pause I look
Round the pillar's ruin'd nook,
Glooms revealing, dim descried,
Ghosts, companion'd by thy side;
Where in old deformity
Ancient arches sweep on high;
And the aisles, to light unknown,
Create a darkness all their own:
Save the moon, as on we pass,
Splinters through the broken glass,
Or the torn roof, patch'd with cloud,
Or the crack'd wall, bulg'd and bow'd,—
Glimmering faint along the ground,
Shooting solemn and profound,
Lighting up the silent gloom
Just to read an ancient tomb:

'Neath where, as it gilding creeps,
We may see some abbot sleeps;
And as on we mete the aisle,
Daring scarce to breathe the while,
Soft as creeping feet can fall,
While the damp green-stained wall
Swift the startled ghost flits by,
Mocking murmurs faintly sigh;
Reminding our intruding fear
Such visits are unwelcome here.
Seemly then, from hollow urn,
Gentle steps our steps return:
E'er so soft and e'er so still,
Check our breath or how we will,
List'ning spirits still reply
Step for step, and sigh for sigh.
Murmuring o'er one's weary woe,
Such as once 'twas theirs to know,
They whisper to such slaves as me,
A buried tale of misery:—

"We once had life, ere life's decline,
Flesh, blood, and bones, the same as thine;
We knew its pains, and shar'd its grief,
Till death, long wish'd-for, brought relief;
We had our hopes, and like to thee,
Hop'd morrow's better day to see,
But like to thine, our hope the same,
To-morrow's kindness never came:
We had our tyrants, e'en as thou;
Our wants met many a scornful brow;
But death laid low their wealthy powers,
Their harmless ashes mix with ours:
And this vain world, its pride, its form,
That treads on thee as on a worm,
Its mighty heirs—the time shall be
When they as quiet sleep by thee!"

O here's thy comfort, Solitude,
When overpowering woes intrude!

Then thy sad, thy solemn dress
'Owns the balm my soul to bless:
Here I judge the world aright;
Here see vain man in his true light;
Learn patience, in this trying hour,
To gild life's brambles with a flower;
Take pattern from the hints thou'st given,
And follow in thy steps to heaven.

END OF VOL. I.

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